



Broadcasting  
Board of  
Governors



## 2016 Annual Report



The Broadcasting Board of Governors is the independent federal government agency that oversees all U.S. civilian international media. BBG is also the name of the board that governs the agency.

The five networks of the BBG are trusted news sources, providing high-quality journalism and programming to more than 278 million people each week.

BBG networks are news leaders, covering stories left untold in environments that lack press freedom and fostering civil dialogue in places overwhelmed with disinformation. They are leading channels for information about the United States as well as independent platforms for freedom of expression and a free press.



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### Learn More Online

Visit our companion website for multimedia content, interactive features and additional information at **2016.bbg.gov**

“This is a very important time for U.S. international media. We are carefully weighing pressing national security concerns, government-wide spending constraints and the need to fine-tune our operations to deliver more impact.”

— JOHN F. LANSING  
FEBRUARY 2016



# Letter from the CEO



2016 was a transformational year for U.S. international media. With unprecedented strategic coordination, the networks of the BBG—Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio and TV Martí), Radio Free Asia, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks —have impacted the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world by providing accurate, unbiased and uncensored news and information.

We have modernized the way we operate in one of the most significant strategic shifts in our agency's history, with an emphasis on rapidly transitioning to digital and social platforms around the world. We are already seeing measurable results with record weekly audience growth of 52 million in the past year for a total weekly audience of 278 million people.

We are more focused on key U.S. foreign policy goals and took the important steps to align our infrastructure and operations with our agency priorities. The result is a strong and nimble global media agency driven by maximizing impact, which in turn advances U.S. foreign policy priorities and national security interests.

BBG networks remain unique in the international media space. Our global networks can be seen and heard in rural and urban areas in the most restrictive countries in the world, including North Korea, Cuba and China. We are the world leader in content distribution—providing news and information on the widest range of platforms available, from shortwave to mobile, making sure our content gets to audiences that need it. In 2016, each of our networks played a critical role in supporting the pursuit of freedom and democracy, covering under reported or censored stories, providing platforms for people to speak freely about issues that are important to them, investigating and exposing corruption, and in many cases serving as a lifeline of information for people struggling to access the truth.

I am honored to work alongside the dedicated and passionate women and men of U.S. international media, and I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish this year. Our extensive reach gives us a competitive advantage to provide objective news where it's needed the most, and our streamlined structure gives us the ability to operate in a targeted and more impactful way. Despite a volatile global media environment, we are seeing consistent growth and aim to continue along that trajectory.

On behalf of the amazing staff of BBG, both in front of and behind the camera, thank you for your support and interest in our work. We are proudly continuing the U.S. international media legacy of making the world a safer and better place, by informing, engaging and connecting audiences around the world in support of freedom and democracy so that they may make informed decisions about their lives, their families and their communities. Promoting civil societies outside of our country makes America a safer place for our own citizens.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John F. Lansing". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

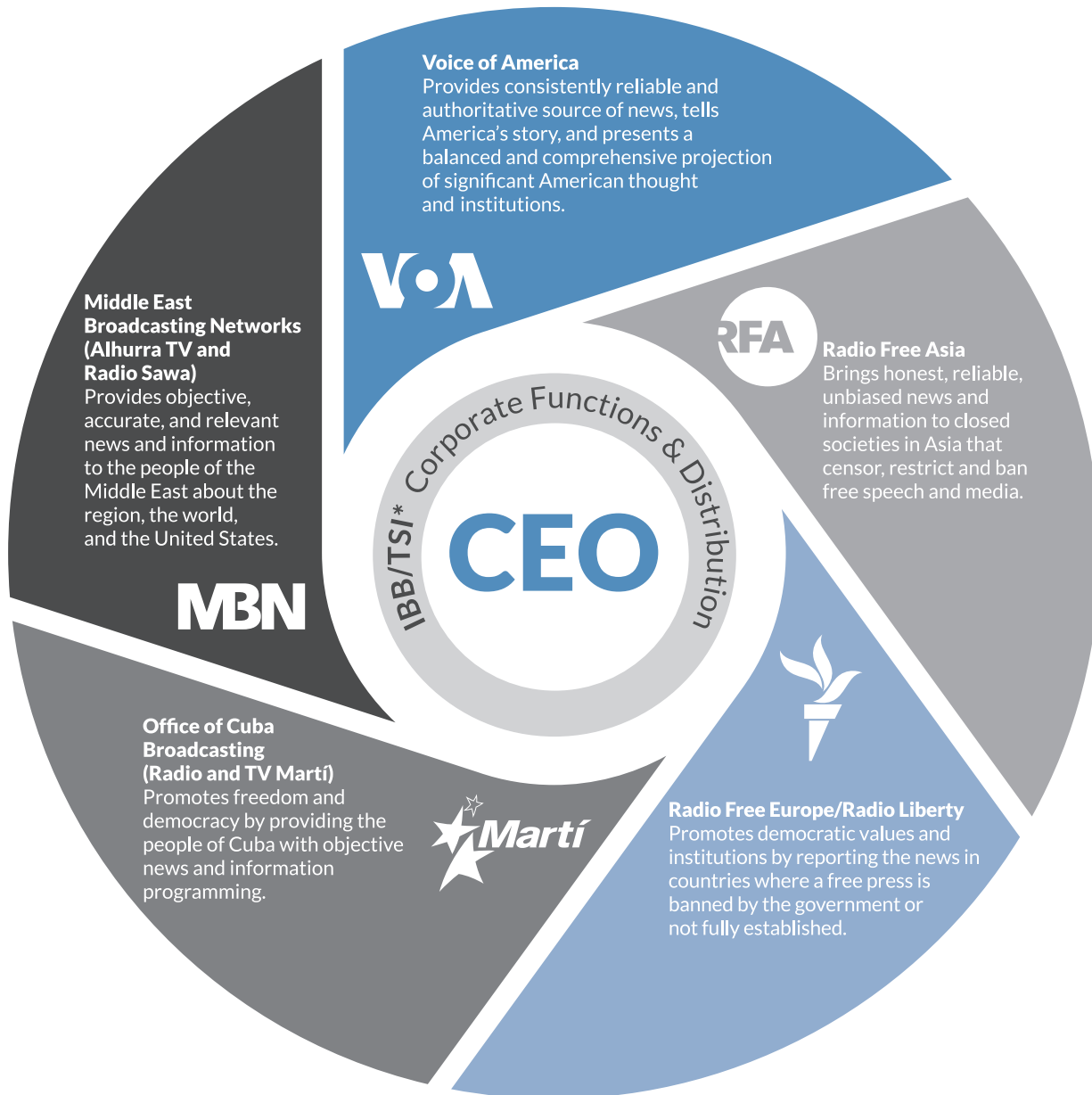
John F. Lansing, BBG CEO and Director

Submitted on behalf of the Broadcasting Board of Governors  
and pursuant to Section 305(a) of the International  
Broadcasting Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-236)

One Mission.

To inform, engage,  
and connect people  
around the world  
in support of freedom  
and democracy.

# One Team. Five Networks.



\* International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB)/ Technology, Services, and Innovation (TSI) provide corporate functions including human resources, budgeting, administrative functions, strategy, research, contracting, security, marketing, distribution, information technology, and engineering, among others.

# A Shared Vision

*While their roles and target audiences are unique, each BBG network has the common goal to provide credible, accurate and reliable information to people who need it the most.*

*Led by world-class media professionals, the networks are made up of passionate, dedicated and brave men and women in bureaus and offices around the world.*



**Amanda Bennett**  
*Voice of America Director*

Voice of America had a record-breaking year in 2016 reaching more people on digital and traditional platforms than ever—even in the most remote or restrictive media environments. In a year marked by disinformation and extremist rhetoric, audiences turned to VOA for fact-based news and information, and for truthful reporting about the United States.

VOA provided unrivaled access to the U.S. election process in 47 languages. In a technological breakthrough, VOA provided live translations of the presidential debates in Russian, Persian, Spanish, Mandarin, and Pashto. VOA increased reporting on entrepreneurship and technology in Silicon Valley, as well as U.S. education and diaspora communities. It was VOA that provided a unique channel linking Somali communities in Minnesota with the Somali President in Mogadishu.

Our journalists created a special team to report on violent extremism—investigating its roots, funding, and propaganda. They faced incredible risks, providing exclusive coverage of Boko Haram camps in Nigeria and reporting on ISIS activities in Iraq and Syria.

VOA experienced its largest-ever growth in weekly audience, jumping 50 million to 236.6 million, with the biggest increases on digital platforms. VOA is in the top five for media audiences on Facebook and/or YouTube in multiple countries, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Central Africa, China, Iran, Myanmar, and Somalia.



**Thomas Kent**  
*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty President*

It is an honor to lead Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which serves some of the world's toughest information geographies. RFE/RL provides honest, factual reporting to nations where state-run media, financial interests and extremists try to dictate the news.

Despite our historic “radio” name, RFE/RL is also fluent in satellite television, web video, podcasts, text stories, infographics, and social networking. Audiences in 23 countries viewed our videos more than a billion times on social networks in 26 languages in FY2016.

In Iran, we defy censorship with informed discussion and debate. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, we engage communities in combatting extremism. RFE/RL is also headquarters for the new Current Time Russian-language TV and digital network, which brings truthful information to a market otherwise filled with misinformation.

In 2016 our journalists stepped up investigative reporting, overcoming intimidation to expose corruption and injustice, and trained new journalists in trustworthy, independent reporting—the best guarantee for credible news in the future.



**Malule González**  
*Office of Cuba Broadcasting Director*

2016 was a historic year for Cuba and for OCB. Not only for the unprecedented events that occurred on the island but for the many changes that occurred within the Martís. Efficiency and synergies were created to transform the operation into a multiplatform media outlet, consistent with the BBG strategic priorities of impact and agility.

OCB's network of independent reporters in Cuba kept growing, spurring the creation of more independent news agencies and the launch of many emergent digital outlets.

But despite these developments, international reports showed that human rights continued to be violated, with journalists and dissidents being persecuted, threatened, and detained. Freedom of speech is still a right that rapprochement has not been able to provide.

Throughout it all, the Martís provided in-depth coverage of stories important to Cuban audiences. Our journalists took considerable risk to unearth stories that Cubans would not otherwise have access to, and OCB distributed the content overcoming censorship and harassment.

The Martís also took the lead in internet freedom efforts with the widely reported inaugural Cuba Internet Freedom Conference (CIF).



**Libby Liu**  
*Radio Free Asia President*

In 2016, Radio Free Asia and the Open Technology Fund made great strides in empowering citizens to be informed decision-makers, exposing the false narratives of authoritarian regimes and extremists, giving voice to the disenfranchised, and providing hope to those who need it.

On radio, TV, social media, and online, we shared the stories of Rohingya refugees, persecuted Chinese Christians and Vietnamese communities devastated by a chemical spill. We broke news about the unrest in China's Uyghur region, North Korea's military buildup and the confiscation of Tibetan passports. And we amplified the voices of government critics in Cambodia, democracy activists in Hong Kong and those affected by extremist violence and terrorism throughout Asia.

We supported technology that protects journalists and their sources from retribution. And we prioritized digital formats, social media and mobile apps to connect with our audiences.



**Brian Conniff**  
*Middle East Broadcasting Networks President*

For the past two years, MBN has covered the fight against ISIS through its newscasts, current affairs programming, websites and social media properties. In particular, the *Raise Your Voice* campaign is aimed at addressing this critical story by countering the themes ISIS uses to recruit fighters and destabilize the governments and societies throughout the region.

In 2016, MBN aggressively expanded its use of digital media, especially social media, as a key element to the network's overall strategy. Digital is a growing priority because it allows us to reach a broader audience, target specific issues and increase impact through engagement.

MBN is uniquely positioned to explain U.S. foreign policies and American values not found on other Arabic-language networks. This was never more apparent than in MBN's coverage of the U.S. elections.

Above all, I am incredibly proud of the work of our dedicated and professional journalists around the world.

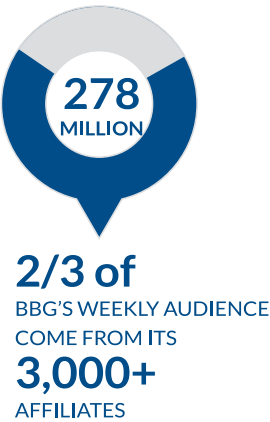


# Leadership Guides Strategy and Organizational Changes

In 2016, CEO Lansing led an organizational restructuring to better align the agency’s strategic priorities, streamline operations and improve allocation of resources. The restructuring improves the agency’s capacity for strategic planning, transmissions, audience research, performance management, marketing, and program placement for all of U.S. international media—resulting in improved stewardship of taxpayer dollars.



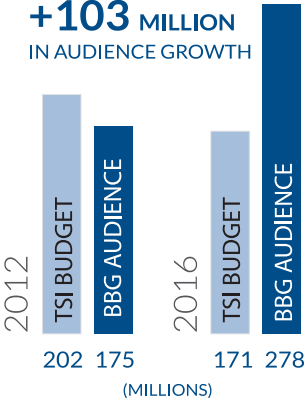
BBG Office of Business Development (OBD) expanded program distribution, developed ongoing relationships with BBG affiliates, and provided training for local journalists. Above, international radio and TV executive Bert Kleinman, provides media management training to representatives from media organizations in Zambia.



BBG'S OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND INNOVATION (TSI) ACHIEVED A CUMULATIVE 5-YEAR COST SAVINGS OF

**128** MILLION

WHILE SUPPORTING  
**+103** MILLION  
IN AUDIENCE GROWTH



### Expanding Content Distribution

The Office of Technology, Services and Innovation (TSI) manages BBG’s technical and infrastructure functions, including delivering content for the agency’s networks and efficiently leveraging cutting-edge and emerging technology to reach new audiences and expand the ways the networks tell stories.

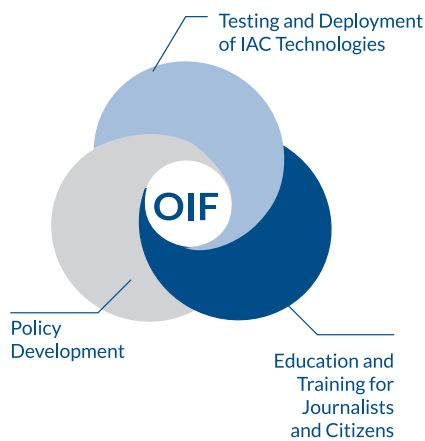
In 2016, BBG continued to realign its traditional transmission assets in order to free up resources for new media initiatives and to improve service to strategically important areas with significant shortwave audiences, such as sub-Saharan Africa and rural South Asia.

An important element in BBG content distribution is partnership with local media affiliates to carry BBG content (BBG networks have more than 3,000 media affiliates). The creation of the

Office of Business Development within TSI consolidates agency resources that support content distribution. The new Office of Business Development also continues to provide journalism training to local media outlets, an important capability to facilitate sustainable affiliate partnerships. In 2016, more than 20 trainings were held around the world, providing valuable capacity building for hundreds of reporters, editors and news managers.

### Consolidating Agency IT Operations

TSI also streamlined the management of the BBG’s information technology and the computer systems required to support the agency’s unique objectives and goals. These include meeting cybersecurity challenges, supervising regulatory compliance issues and managing risk.



OFFICE OF  
INTERNET FREEDOM  
CONSOLIDATED BBG'S  
**\$15 MILLION**  
IAC WORK UNDER  
ONE MANAGEMENT  
STRUCTURE

## Strengthening the Agency's Internet Freedom Activities

In 2016, the BBG created the Office of Internet Freedom (OIF) to oversee the efforts of BBG-funded Internet Freedom (IF) projects, including the work carried out by the Open Technology Fund. The new office manages and supports the research, development, deployment, and use of BBG-funded IF technologies. OIF provides appropriate anti-censorship technologies and services to citizens and journalists living in repressive environments. OIF also supports global education and awareness of IF matters, enhancing users' ability to safely access and share digital news and information without fear of repressive censorship or surveillance.

## Creation of the Office of Policy and Research

The creation of the Office of Policy and Research (OPR) streamlined the agency's global strategy functions to more effectively support agency priorities. The realignment eliminated four IBB offices (the Office of Strategy and Development, the Office of Research and Assessment, the Office of Performance Review, and the Office of Digital and Design Innovation), combined some of their functions, and moved other resources to the networks and to TSI. In addition to the research functions mentioned above,

OPR coordinates BBG intra- and inter-governmental policy engagement so that BBG's activities and role are understood across the U.S. government and by foreign governments and international organizations; facilitates BBG strategic planning; and performs a variety of performance assessment and review functions.

## Streamlining Network Research Capacity

The Office of Policy and Research (OPR) continues to manage the BBG's overall research budget and vendor oversight practices, as well as to set policies ensuring the integrity of the BBG research program across all networks for maximum comparability and reliability. OPR also drives the continuous evolution and consistent application of the BBG Impact Model, and maintains the agency's digital analytics.

To better support the networks' abilities to measure impact—a CEO top priority—and to ensure programming is rooted in research and reaching strategic audiences, research personnel were placed at OCB and VOA. A dedicated Research Director position was created for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, and the VOA Research function was moved from IBB to the VOA Director's office, ensuring better integration of research with the networks' priorities.



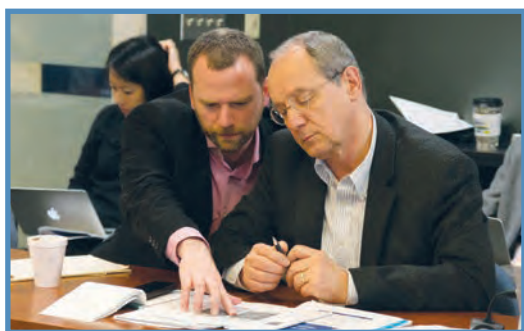
The Office of Policy and Research (OPR) partners with the BBG networks to develop and apply the BBG Impact Model—the common tool all five networks use to measure the impact of their work on audiences.

Left: Sonja Gloeckle, IBB Director of Research, Ernie Torriero, managing editor of VOA's Extremism Watch Desk, and Natalia Crujeiras, OCB Chief Content Officer, discuss impact measures and results during the June 2016 BBG Board meeting.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

# A Year of Impact and Transformation

In 2016 the networks of the BBG created award-winning documentaries, produced targeted and engaging new programs and conducted life-changing investigative reports. Through a successful affiliate strategy and an agency-wide shift to digital, the networks' excellence in journalism reached record audiences. The year saw new leadership, new initiatives, and a continued resolve to bring accurate news and information to areas where information is suppressed. Below are just a few highlights and key moments from the year.



### BBG Impact Summit

BBG conducted a two-day Impact Summit with key leaders and staff from its networks to focus on impact—what it is, how to measure it, and how to plan programming to achieve it.

*For more information on how BBG measures Impact, see page 23.*



**JANUARY 20**

### VOA Kurdish launches new TV program

The 30-minute television news program provides the latest on ISIS, Iraq and Turkey.

*For more information on BBG's efforts to counter violent extremism, see page 42.*



**FEBRUARY 3**

**FEBRUARY 19**

### RFE/RL video goes viral on Facebook, changes the life of its subject

The video of an octogenarian laborer in Pakistan was viewed more than 40 million times, and multiple crowdfunding campaigns raised nearly \$10,000 for the laborer.

*For more information on BBG's shift to digital, see page 28.*

**MARCH 8**

### RFA's trafficking documentary describes Vietnamese mother's ordeal and escape

On International Women's Day, Radio Free Asia released a short documentary, *Vietnam: Cost of Living* which tells the story of a mother who was tricked into working in the Malaysian sex trade.

**+40  
MILLION  
VIEWS**



**\$10,000  
RAISED BY  
CROWDFUNDING  
CAMPAIGNS  
INSPIRED  
BY THE VIDEO**



## RFA investigative reports force unsafe hospitals to close

The government of Tanzania ordered the closing of two North Korean clinics in Dar es Salaam after RFA's Korean Service aired a series of investigative reports on North Korean medical workers' questionable practice in the African country.



MARCH 26

APRIL 15

APRIL 18

MAY 11



## Alhurra TV focuses on female empowerment

The network launched a new program spotlighting successful Egyptian women making their mark on society.



## Amanda Bennett sworn in as new director of the Voice of America

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Amanda Bennett became the 29th Director of the VOA.

## Crimea Realities chief says ban won't stop website

Russian internet regulator Roskomnadzor started blocking the RFE/RL's news website on Crimea; Russian authorities have indicted one of the website's contributors on charges of "separatism."

*For more information on internet censorship, see page 17.*

# Accelerating Towards the Future



**Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty announces Thomas Kent as new President**

Long-time Associated Press journalist Thomas Kent was appointed the new President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

**BBG names first director of Internet Freedom Office**

Engineer and attorney Dr. Nnake Nweke was named the first-ever Director of the newly created Office of Internet Freedom.

*For more information about the new office, see page 9.*



JUNE 10                      JULY 8                      AUGUST 12                      SEPTEMBER 13



**Voice of America launches Extremism Watch Desk**

VOA's new Extremism Watch Desk, which monitors news related to extremism that most Western media do not report, enhances VOA's coverage of violent extremism and terrorism, and is shared with other BBG networks.

**Cuban activist participates in OCB's Cuba Internet Freedom conference live via mobile app from Cuba**

Never before has a Cuban citizen been able to join a live event such as this that promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the internet while in Cuba.

*For more information about how BBG is supporting human rights in Cuba, see page 58.*





### BBG networks provide a front-row seat to historic U.S. elections

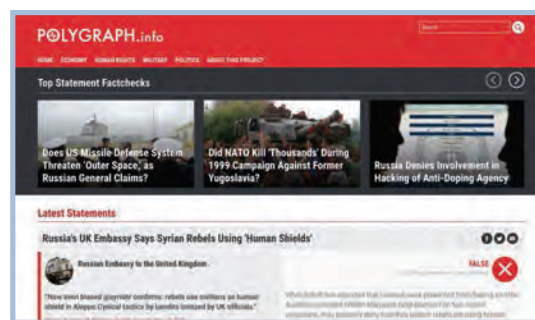
Audiences around the world, including in some of the most press-restrictive countries, had real-time access to full, comprehensive coverage of the historic 58th U.S. presidential election, thanks to the networks of the BBG.

*For more information about BBG's coverage of the election, see page 36.*

### VOA and RFE/RL launch fact-checking website Polygraph.info to speak truth to disinformation

The nonpartisan website is a timely response to the deluge of often false or misleading information confounding audiences around the world. The site analyzes statements from government officials and other high-profile individuals to assess their veracity.

*To find out more about BBG's work responding to misinformation in Russia, see page 46.*



NOVEMBER 8

NOVEMBER 15

DECEMBER 6

DECEMBER 23



### BBG international audience grows to 278 million

The BBG saw its largest ever increase in its worldwide audience. According to the 2016 performance report, the agency's total unduplicated weekly global audience is 278 million.

### Technical amendments added to the International Broadcasting Act

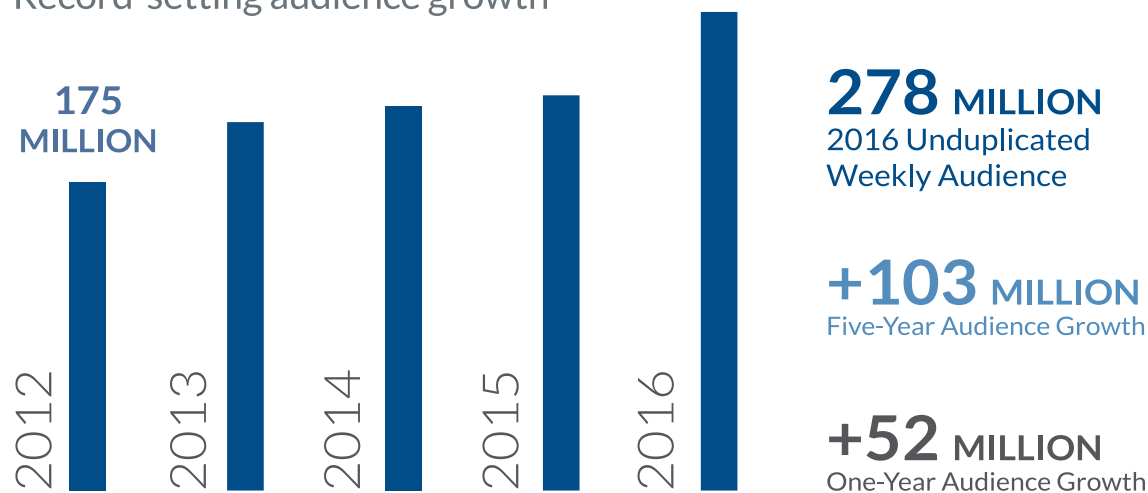
President Barack Obama signed into law, the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which includes an amendment to BBG's organic statute, the International Broadcasting Act, for the stated purposes of increasing efficiency, agility and operational flexibility. This amendment establishes and authorizes the position of Chief Executive Officer of the BBG.

# Getting Results

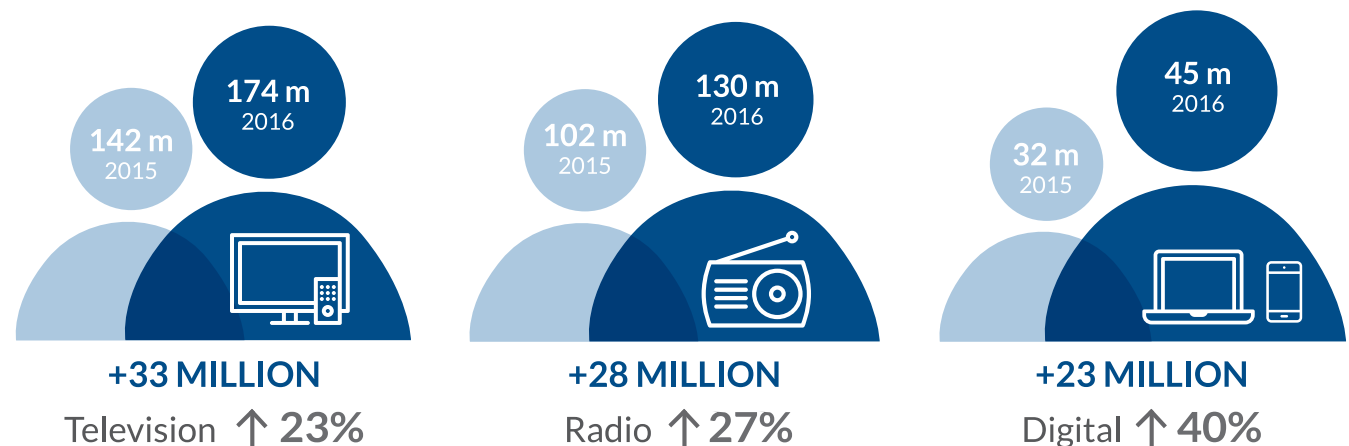
In 2016 the BBG recorded its largest ever increase in its weekly worldwide audience to 278 million people, up from 226 million in 2015. These increases occurred across all platforms with digital platforms seeing the largest percentage growth, followed by radio and television.

## AUDIENCE GROWTH

Record-setting audience growth



Increases in audience growth by media

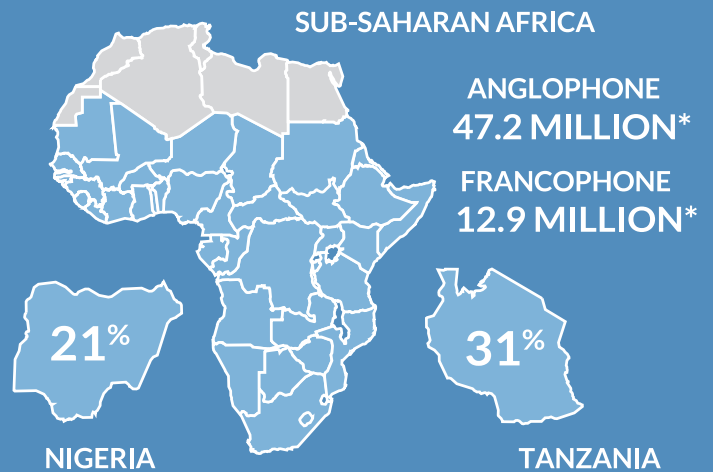
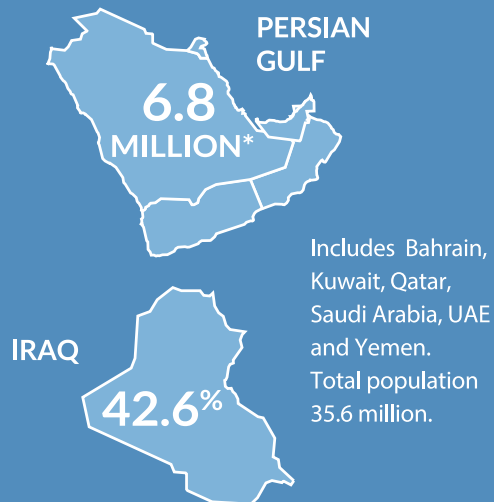


BBG measures audience by individual media as well as total unduplicated audience. 278 million is the total unduplicated weekly audience.

## GROWTH IN PRIORITY IMPACT AREAS

Reaching audiences subject to extremist violence (% of population or total audience)

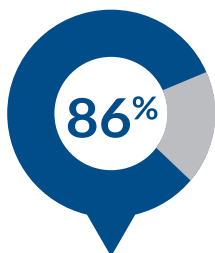
\*Multi-country estimates are presented in real numbers, rather than percentages because of the potential high variations in percentages across countries.



Reaching audiences targeted by state-sponsored misinformation

RUSSIAN FEDERATION	4.9%	TAJIKISTAN	11.4%
UKRAINE	18%	LATVIA	7.2%
MOLDOVA	32.1%	LITHUANIA	10%

Achieving high levels of credibility with audiences



OF VOA'S  
AUDIENCE  
RATED ITS  
PROGRAMMING  
TRUSTWORTHY

Helping audiences overcome censorship through anti-censorship technology



INCREASE IN THE  
VOLUME OF INTERNET  
TRAFFIC THROUGH  
BBG-SUPPORTED  
PROXY TOOLS



INCREASE IN MESSAGES  
SENT TO CUBA  
THROUGH OCB'S  
SOCIAL NETWORK  
TOOL PIRAMEDO

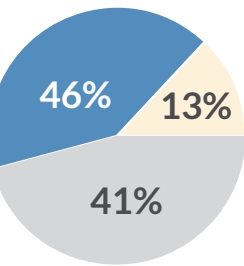
# Press & Internet Freedom Under Attack

According to the Freedom House 2016 Press Freedom report, press freedom—under attack by terrorist, government and criminal forces—has reached the lowest point in 12 years. And, the 2016 Freedom on the Net report found that internet freedom was in an overall decline due to increased government censorship particularly of social media and messaging services.

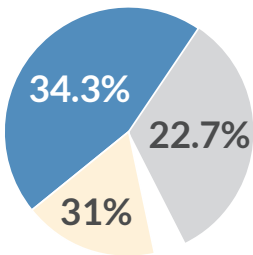
## MAP OF PRESS FREEDOM

- Press Not Free
- Press Free
- Press Partly Free
- Not a BBG Audience

Designated by Freedom House's 2016 Map of Press Freedom



**87% OF GLOBAL POPULATION**  
do not have access to free press  
**3.4 BILLION PEOPLE**  
live in a country without a free press  
Freedom House's 2016 Report on Press Freedom



**GLOBAL INTERNET POPULATION**

- Internet Not Free
- Internet Free
- Internet Partly Free
- 12% Not assessed

Freedom House's 2016 Freedom On the Net

## WORST OF THE WORST

### PRESS FREEDOM

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| NORTH KOREA  | CUBA       |
| TURKMENISTAN | BELARUS    |
| UZBEKISTAN   | EQ. GUINEA |
| CRIMEA       | IRAN       |
| ERITREA      | SYRIA      |

### INTERNET FREEDOM

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| CHINA      | CUBA         |
| IRAN       | SAUDI ARABIA |
| SYRIA      | VIETNAM      |
| ETHIOPIA   |              |
| UZBEKISTAN |              |



## BBG NETWORKS' INCIDENTS OF INTERNET CENSORSHIP

### Iran

The Iranian regime escalated its efforts to block the websites of VOA's Persian Service and RFE/RL's Radio Farda in early 2016, targeting local access via proxies and throttling down internet speeds to prevent the use of countermeasures such as virtual private networks (VPN) for access to the open internet.

### Chechnya

From January to March 2016, desktop and mobile access to the Chechen-language webpage of RFE/RL's North Caucasus Service was blocked inside of Chechnya. To compensate, the Service set up proxy access using the Psiphon 2 platform and moved content onto Facebook and social media platforms.

### Crimea

Access to RFE/RL's Crimea website, krym.realii was blocked on March 12 by Russia's internet regulator, which renewed access one day later. Access to the website was again blocked by service providers in Russia-annexed Crimea on August 1; access to RFE/RL websites are also restricted in the self-described Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic, in Ukraine's embattled east.

### Tajikistan

Access to RFE/RL's Tajik Service's website within Tajikistan has been blocked since September 2015; however, the Service's online audiences remain steady due to widespread usage of VPNs and other anti-censorship strategies.

### Belarus

RFE/RL's Belarus Service website experienced a sophisticated Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack on October 28, which made the site inaccessible for a short period of time. The attack came shortly after the Belarus Service reported on the sentencing of blogger Eduard Palchys in Minsk. RFE/RL network staff restored full functionality to the site within four hours.

### China

The Chinese government continued to block access to VOA's website and mobile apps. VOA accounts on Chinese social media platforms such as Sina Weibo and WeChat were either removed or not allowed to be registered by the operators. Frequent crackdown on the use of circumvention tools, such as the virtual private network (VPN), were reported.



# Threats to Press

The right to free and open access to information should be universal, but threats to a free press persisted throughout 2016. While the BBG celebrated the release of one journalist in Azerbaijan, around the world, others were being killed, harassed, threatened, beaten and imprisoned. These are just a few of those incidents.

## IN MEMORIUM: ALMIGDAD MOJALLI



**Sanaa, Yemen:** Freelance journalist Almgidat Mojalli was killed in an air strike in the Yemen capital in January 2016 while on assignment for the Voice of America. Mojalli had been reporting for VOA on the human impact of the war and the economic crisis in Yemen.

*"I've been to dozens of bomb sites. Even as a Yemeni, it is hard not to become desensitized. Every day, I wake up to hear that 10 people were killed last night, or 20, or 40. It almost stops feeling real. More than anything, you focus on protecting those you care for. I am a journalist working in a war zone, but I am also a husband, a son and a father."*

— ALMIGDAD MOJALLI

in a first-person account written for IRIN, an independent media organization reporting from the front lines of crises around the world.



Photo of the aftermath of an air strike in Yemen taken by Almgidat Mojalli as part of his ongoing coverage of the conflict.



Nguyen Ngoc Gia



Lázaro Yuri Valle Roca



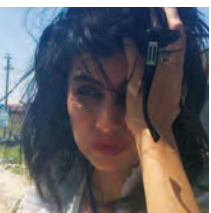
Mykola Semena



Coque Mukuta



Naimatullah Sarhadi



Zhiyar Muhamed



Mahmut Bozarslan



Hatice Kamer

## 2016 Incident reports

### March

**Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam:** RFA blogger and journalist Nguyen Ngoc Gia was sentenced to a four-year prison term with another three years of probation for carrying out “propaganda against the state,” a section of the penal code routinely used to target activists.

**Havana, Cuba:** During President Obama’s trip to Cuba in March, independent Cuban journalist and Martí contributor Lázaro Yuri Valle Roca was detained by Cuban secret police while covering a protest march in Havana. He was released after several days in custody, but criminal charges are still pending.

**Moscow, Russia:** On March 18, RFE/RL’s Moscow bureau administrator was approached at her home by two unknown men identifying themselves as journalists with Russia’s NTV channel and seeking personal information. The incident occurred one week after an edition of the popular television program *News Of The Week With Dmitry Kiselyov*, the Kremlin’s lead propagandist, portrayed RFE/RL journalists as spies conspiring against Russia.

### April

**Washington, DC:** Reporters from RFA’s Tibetan service were harassed by Chinese nationals while covering Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to the nuclear security summit in Washington in April 2016. A mob of demonstrators used Chinese flags to block the journalists from filing reports while some pushed and shoved the reporters, forcing police to intervene.

**Crimean Peninsula:** Mykola Semena, a contributor to RFE/RL’s Crimea Realities website, was accused in April of calling for “the violation of the territorial integrity of Russia” in an article he wrote in 2015, expressing the view that Crimea, annexed by Moscow in 2014, should be returned to Ukraine. He is currently prohibited from leaving Crimea, and faces separatism charges and a five-year prison term if convicted.

### May

**Luanda, Angola:** Coque Mukuta, a contributing reporter for VOA’s Portuguese-to-Africa Service, was arrested and beaten by police officers on May 24 while working on a story about police corruption. His camera was confiscated.

**Balochistan, Pakistan:** VOA Deewa service reporter Naimatullah Sarhadi was attacked by local police on May 12 at a checkpoint in the town of Chaman while returning home from an assignment. When he identified himself as a VOA contributor, he was severely beaten and his nose was broken. The next day, local journalists demonstrated against the violence.

**Iraqi Kurdistan:** On May 12, VOA Kurdish contributing reporter Zhiyar Muhamed was attacked while covering a protest outside a mosque in Sulaymaniyah. A uniformed Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) official demanded Muhamad’s camera and cell phone, threatening to beat her if she did not comply. When she refused, the official punched her in the head, breaking her glasses. Muhamad managed to retain her equipment and continued to cover the protest as the security official eventually was removed by other KSF members.

### June

**Midyat, Turkey:** In June, VOA Turkish reporter Mahmut Bozarslan was beaten by a group of young people while shooting video at the scene of a car bombing. VOA Kurdish contributing reporter Hatice Kamer was also covering the same bombing when she was attacked with rocks. Both were hospitalized with injuries.

“You have to be beaten, so VOA will not get its story.”

— POLICE OFFICER IN LUANDA TO VOA REPORTER COQUE MUKUTA





Waakhe Simon Wudu



Zana Omar



Rolando Rodríguez  
Lobaina



Manuel León Velázquez



Rasool Mahmood



Nguyen Van Hoa



Khudayberdy Allashov



Rovshen Yazmuhammedov



Soltan Achilova

## July

**South Sudan:** In July, VOA stringers Michael Magu Atit, Waakhe Simon Wudu, and Bonifacio Taban Kuich were caught in the fighting between soldiers backing South Sudan's president and the opposition. The three were initially prohibited from leaving the country.

**Syria:** In July, an ISIS truck bomb exploded 50 feet from the home of VOA stringer Zana Omar, destroying his home and injuring Zana, his wife and two children.

**Armenia:** Three RFE/RL Armenian Service journalists were attacked by a large group of plainclothes men late on July 29, while they were covering clashes between riot police and protesters marching in support of armed gunmen who had occupied a police compound in the capital, Yerevan for two weeks.

## August

**Phnom Penh, Cambodia:** Staff from RFA's Khmer Service has received threats throughout the year by phone and social media. In August 2016, threatening comments addressed to specific RFA journalists were posted to the Khmer Service's Facebook page. Another reporter working in RFA's Phnom Penh office received a threatening phone call from an anonymous caller, who mentioned his family and the fate of a Cambodian public figure who was recently assassinated.

## October

**Guantanamo, Cuba:** Independent Cuban journalists Rolando Rodríguez Lobaina and Manuel León Velázquez were detained for several hours while investigating the devastation caused by a hurricane on the country's eastern coast.

**Egypt:** In October, Egyptian authorities called in MBN staffers for questioning about their activities in and around Cairo. One member of the MBN administrative team was questioned by the Egyptian National Police about Alhurra programming. Later that month, the Egyptian National Security Police detained and questioned an MBN news crew that was filming a news report on the high number of traffic fatalities.

**Northern Iraq:** Rasool Mahmood, a freelance reporter for RFE/RL's Radio Farda, was wounded during fighting in Bashiqa on October 20. He was accompanying Kurdish Peshmerga forces that encountered mortar and rocket fire as they advanced on Mosul, an ISIS stronghold. Mahmood's injuries included a broken arm, a broken nose and the loss of one eye.

**Yemen:** In October, an MBN journalist was detained and questioned by the local police and a Houthi rebel local commander in relation to an interview the journalist conducted on education in Yemen.

**Iraq:** Also in October, an MBN journalist reporting on the theft of military goods from an airport received a threat of a lawsuit by local political party officials for his coverage of the topic.

## November

**Vietnam:** Nguyen Van Hoa, a videographer with Radio Free Asia's Vietnamese Service was beaten by police during a confrontation in November. Police confiscated the journalist's equipment, including his mobile phone and camera.

## December

**Diyarbakir, Turkey:** VOA stringer Khajijan Farqin was detained in early December while reporting outside Diyarbakir, Turkey. She was released after a day of being denied access to an attorney.

**Turkmenistan:** Turkmen authorities on December 5 arrested RFE/RL Turkmen Service contributor Khudayberdy Allashov on charges of possessing chewing tobacco, only days after correspondent Rovshen Yazmuhammedov was threatened with arrest and another, Soltan Achilova, was injured in a series of violent attacks. Allashov was released 12 weeks later.

## IN CELEBRATION: KHADIJA ISMAYILOVA RELEASED



**Baku, Azerbaijan:** On May 25, RFE/RL journalist Khadija Ismayilova was released from prison after Azerbaijan's Supreme Court reduced her jail sentence from 7½ years in custody to a suspended term of 3½ years, with a five-year ban on traveling outside of the country without permission. The court upheld Ismayilova's convictions for illegal entrepreneurship and tax evasion—charges that RFE/RL, along with many human rights organizations, reject as baseless. Ismayilova served 537 days in prison.

RFE/RL's Baku bureau remains closed after a 2015 government raid, and a criminal investigation by state authorities on unspecified charges remains active.

*"I'm going to continue my investigations [and] work on the Panama Papers."*

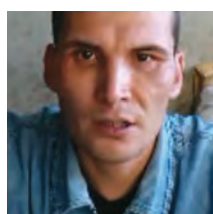
*It's the job I like."*

— KHADIJA ISMAYILOVA

Above: Khadija Ismayilova is greeted by friends and family after her release.



Bashar Fahmi



Saparmamed Nepeskuliev

## Ongoing

### Missing since 2012

**Syria:** On August 20, 2012, Alhurra Television correspondent Bashar Fahmi was part of a group of journalists reporting from Aleppo when a firefight erupted. He has not been heard from since.

### Jailed since 2015

**Southwestern Turkmenistan's Balkan Province:** RFE/RL reporter Saparmamed Nepeskuliev remains in detention, serving the first year of a three-year prison sentence for dubious narcotics charges widely believed to have been brought by Turkmen authorities because of his uncensored reporting. RFE/RL was one of twelve media and human rights groups to send a joint letter on June 30 to the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, calling for Nepeskuliev's release.

# Strategic Priorities Overview

The BBG's five strategic priorities, articulated by CEO John Lansing and endorsed by the Board, maximize the agility, efficiency and impact of the BBG networks and enable the agency to more effectively address the rapidly evolving media environment.

## 1 **Improve accountability and impact measurement**

In 2016, BBG enhanced its comprehensive Impact Model to assess and evaluate the impact that BBG programming actually has on the lives of its audiences and their communities. This complex combination of qualitative and quantitative research has been designed with the BBG's unique operating environments in mind and provides a consistent measurement structure for future strategy, implementation and review cycles.

## 2 **Implement a market-driven shift to digital distribution**

Although TV and radio continue to dominate in many parts of the world, the BBG is responding to audiences' preferred media platforms and increasing the production of content and high-quality journalism on digital platforms, especially video, mobile and social networks. This distribution strategy shifts from one-way dissemination to enable direct, real-time engagement with audiences.

## 3 **Enhance strategic cooperation between networks**

The five BBG networks are putting unprecedented emphasis on coordination and content sharing in order to better report on the stories that matter to their audiences. The U.S. International Media Coordinating Committee (ICC), comprised of the leaders of the five BBG networks, meets biweekly to discuss coverage opportunities, share content and coordinate resources.

## 4 **Increase curation of content**

By partnering with compelling storytellers, documentarians and journalists, the BBG provides its audiences with exceptional and relevant programming, maximizes resources and improves operational efficiency.

## 5 **Target efforts organized by foreign policy priorities**

While it continues to have a global footprint, the BBG is prioritizing resources to ensure that its activities advance U.S. foreign policy priorities and national security interests through independent journalism. To this end, the BBG is targeting its resources to address the information needs of audiences in Russia, China, Iran, and Cuba, as well as those in areas affected by violent extremism.



# Measuring Impact

The BBG has always emphasized measuring the impact of its programs and activities, putting the audience first and holding itself accountable. The Impact Model measures the BBG’s ability to achieve its mission—how well is it informing, engaging and connecting with audiences, and is it influential in support of freedom and democracy.

Participants at the Impact Summit held robust discussions on how BBG networks best measure and reflect the impact of their broadcasts. From left to right: Alen Mlatishma, VOA Eurasia Internet Managing Editor and Setereh Derakhshesh, Director of VOA Persian Service.



## Impact Summit

In 2016, BBG conducted a two-day Impact Summit with key leaders and staff of its networks to focus on impact—what it is, how to measure it and how to plan programming to achieve it. The result was an improved BBG Impact Model that features more than 40 indicators to measure impact beyond audience size.

## Improved Impact Model

Audience loyalty, content credibility, whether and how content is shared, how much audiences engage with content and whether actions—such as a policy change or a cultural shift—take place after consuming BBG content are some of the indicators available in the research tool.

This complex combination of qualitative and quantitative research has been designed with the BBG’s unique operating environments in mind and provides a consistent measurement structure for future strategy, implementation and review cycles.

The framework provides a common standard to define and measure impact across a variety of media platforms, in the 61 languages and more than 100 countries in which the BBG networks operate.

The relaunched Impact Model is now fully integrated into BBG strategic planning and performance reporting.

# Impact Model

## INDICATORS

The model examines 12 core and 28 optional quantitative and qualitative indicators to show network reach and effectiveness along the dimensions of our mission. These measurements include a blend of quantitative survey data (BBG surveys, Gallup World Poll, omnibus surveys), digital data (analytics, social media, ratings data) and qualitative anecdotal evidence (impact stories, news pick-ups, guest appearances).



## INFORM

### Reach Target Audiences

Measured by weekly reach and digital visits among general population, as well as among particular audiences such as vernacular speakers, women, youth and influential individuals both online and off.

### Provide Value

BBG networks strive to relay credible, objective and unique information with high-broadcast quality.

## ENGAGE/CONNECT

### Engage Target Audiences

Audience shares something or talks with someone as a result of our weekly broadcasts. Audience recommends our broadcasts to others.

### Connect Media Markets

Increased number of affiliates and content downloaded by affiliates. Other markers include increased content co-creation with affiliates and citizen journalism submissions.

### Create Loyalty

BBG networks aim to be a preferred news source among weekly audiences, among the general population, and/or on a specific topic.

## BE INFLUENTIAL

### Be Influential with Audiences

Increase understanding of current events, American society and U.S. foreign policy, as well as help users form opinions on important topics.

### Be Influential with Media

Drive the news agenda, garner high profile news pick-ups, push for improvements in journalistic practices and influence on media operators.

### Be Influential with Governments

Attention from public officials.

## MEASURING IMPACT

# Inform: Providing Value Beyond Reach



Mourners pack Phnom Penh's Wat Chas pagoda for a Buddhist funeral ceremony for slain social critic Kem Ley, July 16, 2016. (RFA)

"I was surprised how Alhurra TV addressed this issue [corruption] in a daring way...Alhurra TV shows the truth as seen by the people."

— IRAQI CITIZEN

### Cambodia

RFA's Khmer Service broadcast live video on Facebook, YouTube and the Khmer website for 13 ½ hours on Sunday, July 24, to cover the funeral procession of Kem Ley, an academic and government critic who was gunned down just a day and a half after criticizing Prime Minister Hun Sen and his family on Radio Free Asia. In parts of Cambodia, people gathered in small groups to watch RFA's Facebook Live program, with several hundred people gathering at a pagoda in Battambang for the event. Local media reported little on Kem Ley's murder and the government issued a directive discouraging media from covering the funeral procession. There were over 28 million views over the course of the 13 ½ hours, and over 11.4 million reactions, 293,000 comments and 1.6 million shares. Roughly, a quarter of the comments were thanking RFA for bringing this event to the Khmer people.

### Cuba

During President Obama's trip to Cuba in March, the Martí successfully broadcast live coverage to the island via DirecTV, and through shortwave and medium wave radio. The Cuban government continued to censor the Martí on the island, however, the Martí's YouTube channel and social media saw a spike in live viewership when President Obama landed in Havana. Facebook posts received more than 600,000 views in a matter of hours.

Members of the international press corps captured footage of people watching the live stream in the Habana Libre Hotel, as well as Cuban State Security officials monitoring TV Martí's live stream on YouTube at the Press Center.

VOA Spanish provided Latin American audiences multifaceted coverage of the President's trip, interviewing dissidents, members of the political opposition and local residents. In addition to its on-the-ground coverage, VOA provided context by explaining the impact on US foreign policy and bilateral relations. Several regional affiliates identified VOA as a critical source of information.

### Tajikistan

After a nationwide electricity blackout plunged Tajikistan into darkness for three hours on October 27, RFE/RL's Tajik Service went live on Facebook to fill information gaps left by crippled local media outlets, including public TV and radio. Within 30 minutes, the Service was informing its audience about a technical problem at the country's biggest hydropower plant that caused the blackout; it also reported on the situation in hospitals, airports and police departments, and published video on how the city looked in complete darkness. International news outlets such as BBC and Interfax relied on RFE/RL reporting about the blackout.

# Engaging and Connecting Audiences

## Afghanistan

VOA's Dari/Pashto Service's popular show for women, *NajibaNoshaba*, featured guest Guljan Zmarai, the head of the Afghan Women's Business Federation. During the show, a large number of women called in, asking how they could get small loans to start their own businesses. Zmarai was able to provide them with detailed information on the membership and loan application process and provided callers with her direct telephone number for those in need of assistance. At least eight listeners received loans as a result of that broadcast.

## Nagorno-Karabakh

When major combat broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh in early April, RFE/RL's Armenian and Azerbaijani Services—unlike any other news media—provided live reporting from the front lines of the conflict in both languages. RFE/RL engaged audiences with both sides of the story, which resonated with its audience and paid major dividends in viewership.

The Armenian Service's video coverage received nearly 7 million combined views on Facebook, YouTube and the web; an Armenian Service cameraman in Nagorno-Karabakh also captured video, used by *The Washington Post* and *The Jerusalem Post*, of what could be the first use of an Israeli-made Harop "suicide drone" in combat.

## Iraq

Alhurra's Raise Your Voice Facebook page repeatedly interacts with ISIS sympathizers. In one example, a few ISIS sympathizers commented on an article regarding ISIS military defeats. The sympathizers said ISIS represents Islam and will not be defeated. The Raise Your Voice moderators replied with links to other articles and information on how ISIS is being defeated in Iraq and Syria. Audience members also commented, saying the sympathizers are wrong, and discussed how ISIS is a criminal and terrorist group and should not be considered representative of Islam.

## Iraqi Kurdistan

An ethnic Yazidi woman whose face was severely disfigured by a mine blast as she escaped ISIS enslavement in Iraq received medical treatment after listeners responded to a VOA story detailing her plight. Doctors told 18-year-old Lamiya Hachi Bashar her complex injuries required treatment not available in Iraq. After the VOA Kurdish Service reported on her story, news of her situation went viral. At least a half dozen groups from Israel and Europe contacted VOA asking how they could assist. Bashar was flown to Germany in May where she underwent surgery to restore sight in one eye.

"I'm one of your faithful listeners who knows that you have many others. Sometimes I can't tune in because the radio that I own does not receive a signal because it is in very bad condition, and then I have to walk to a friend's house who lives 12 blocks from my house"

— LISTENER FROM CARDENAS



# MEASURING IMPACT

## Being Influential

### **Trusted, Valued Reporting Cited by:**

*New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, USA Today, Associated Press, Bloomberg, Reuters, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, The Economist, The Guardian, Al Jazeera, U.S. News and World Report, UPI, Foreign Policy, International Business Times, NPR, Huffington Post, AllAfrica, Al-Yaum Al-Sabe'a, Asharq al Awsat, Al-Ahram, El-Bashayer, Qatar News Agency, Akhbar Al-Iraq, Addustor, BBC, FOX, Agence France Presse, Phnom Penh Post, Yonhap, South China Morning Post, Straits Times, Kyodo News, KBS, Miami Herald, El Nuevo Herald, Diario Las America, Yahoo News, Univision, CNN Espanol, NBC News, Telemundo, Diario De Cuba, EFE, El Mercurio*

“(Alhurra’s coverage of ISIS) has changed my thinking... (I thought ISIS) was good...but I’ve seen now the execution and murder... I have not seen this story covered in a similar way in other media.”

— SYRIAN WOMAN

### **North Korea**

The government of Tanzania ordered the closing of two North Korean clinics in the major port city of Dar es Salaam on April 15, two months after RFA’s Korean Service aired a series of investigative reports on North Korean medical workers’ questionable practices in the African country. The two-part series, which aired in January and February, cited examples of dangerous malpractice by the North Korean medical workers in Tanzania. Sources told RFA’s Korean Service that the South Korean ambassador to Tanzania met with the Tanzanian Minister of Health and showed him RFA’s investigative reports translated into English.

### **Zimbabwe**

VOA’s Zimbabwe Service dedicated an episode of its radio show *Women’s Roundtable* to the plight of Zimbabwean women who, desperate for employment, applied to be domestic workers in Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries but were instead forced into slavery. As a result of the broadcast, the government in Harare reacted—more than 30 women were repatriated, and a delegation made up of the Speaker of Parliament, members of Parliament and lawyers went to Kuwait to investigate the situation. Many of the trafficked women informed the Zimbabwe Service that they learned ways to escape based on information they heard on *Women’s Roundtable*.

### **Iraq**

Radio Sawa’s call-in show, *What’s Your Opinion*, had an episode dedicated to the widows of Iraqi security forces killed in the war against ISIS. One of the callers was a widow who explained the difficulties of navigating the bureaucracy to get her benefits. She said that she and

her children had been living in poverty since her husband was killed. The guest on the show was a representative from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, who offered to help the caller receive her husband’s pension.

### **Uzbekistan**

In December 2016, local officials sent college students back to their studies after RFE/RL’s Uzbek Service documented the extended use of students to pick cotton in central Samarkand province. Audiences also thanked the Uzbek Service for helping deliver their messages about poor road conditions to authorities, who immediately started building roads for them.

### **Laos**

Lao officials implemented new policy and made changes as a direct result of RFA’s investigative journalism, including the suspension of operations at a Chinese-run e-waste plant in Vientiane because of pollution concerns, tougher regulations for banana plantations that poisoned water sources in Bokeo province and an official investigation into illegal logging in the Khammouan province.

### **Ukraine**

VOA’s comprehensive reporting on Ukraine’s anti-corruption campaign and interviews with leading American experts led to an intense public debate. In response to a VOA Ukrainian tweet on how Ukrainians could fight corruption more vigorously, Hudson Institute expert Hannah Thoburn suggested the President fire the General Prosecutor, Viktor Shokin. On the day Mr. Shokin tendered his resignation (February 16, 2016), Thoburn tweeted, “It’s nice to think that we perhaps played a small role in bringing things to a head and finally getting Shokin’s resignation. Bravo VOA!”

PRIORITY 2

# Shift to Digital





Audiences around the world are increasingly using mobile devices and social networks to get their news and information. BBG is responding by rapidly increasing the production of content and high-quality journalism for these digital platforms and shifting from one-way distribution to a more audience-engaging platform.

Right: Ryan Kellett, Director of Audience Growth and a senior editor at *The Washington Post*, was a guest speaker at the BBG Social Media Summit, September 2016.

Left: Syrian refugees check their mobile phone while staying in a settlement camp in Koura, near Tripoli, Lebanon. (Jane Barlow/PA Wire via AP)



VOA

**166 MILLION**  
Facebook Engagements  
**+42%**

MBN

**51 MILLION**  
Facebook Engagements  
**1.13 BILLION**  
Video Views  
**+1800%** Since 2015

RFE/RL

**224 MILLION**  
Engaged Facebook Users  
**+59%** Since 2015

## Social Media Summit

In September, leaders of each of the five networks and their social media experts assembled for the first-ever BBG Social Media Summit, to share best practices, ideas and resources. The Washington, D.C. event featured topics such as the explosion of video on all digital platforms, and the importance of tailoring content to different social platforms.

## TARGETING DIGITAL PLATFORMS

### Websites

Voice of America saw significant gains on visits to its websites. Total site visits across all languages grew by 41 percent over the past three years, and article views exceeded 301 million in 2016, a 30 percent increase compared to 2014 totals.

### Social Media

All five networks utilize social media to inform and engage their audiences. In most parts of the world, Facebook is the most popular social media site, and it continues to be an increasingly important platform for accessing information.

For VOA, engagements on Facebook were up 42 percent, to 166 million, while YouTube video views grew 93 percent in 2016. VOA Afghanistan (Dari and Pashto) had the fastest-growing Facebook pages in the country, with over 40 million engagement actions and 74 million video views in 2016.

In 2016 MBN saw exponential growth of engagement on its Facebook pages. MBN's four main Facebook accounts (Alhurra, Alhurra-Iraq, Radio Sawa and Raise Your Voice) saw engagement rise by 276 percent to more than 51 million.

RFE/RL saw nearly 224 million engaged users across all of its Facebook properties in 2016, which represents a 59 percent increase from the previous year.

**Nigeria:** VOA Hausa, which has one of the most popular websites in U.S. international media, leveraged its powerful social media following to engage youth and dissuade them from insurgent recruitment. Radio show *Yau da Gobe (Today and Tomorrow)* and the digital stream Dandalin VOA, were especially successful in engaging audiences in conversation.

**Afghanistan:** RFE/RL's Afghan Service had USIM's highest level of engagement on Facebook, with a monthly average of 3.1 million engaged users, followed by Radio Farda at 2.5 million engaged users per month.

**Cuba:** The Office of Cuba Broadcasting found that while Cuban authorities block access to its website, many users in Cuba access its news content via social media and watch the live streaming of TV Martí and the visual-radio Martí programs via Facebook.

### Mobile

Radio Free Asia launched a streaming application, enabling digital access to live broadcasts and podcasts of RFA's nine language services via mobile devices. VOA's streamer app was enhanced to include more than 40 languages. The mobile streamer apps, developed by BBG's Office of Digital and Design Innovation, in partnership with AudioNow, make it possible for

audio content to be accessed through mobile data or cellular connections to save money and bandwidth. They are available for free on the Apple App store and Google Play.

RFE/RL's Pangea content management system completed the conversion of all VOA, RFE/RL, MBN, and OCB websites to a responsive design, providing an optimal viewing and interaction experience across a wide range of devices, including tablets and mobile phones.

### Messaging Apps

**China:** As the Chinese government tightened censorship of the web and social media, VOA and RFA used messaging apps, including the WeChat messaging service, to get reporting tips, ask questions and share content links.

**Tibet:** VOA Tibetan is taking advantage of the growing use of VPNs and other circumvention tools that allow digital distribution of information to reach audiences within Tibet. VOA Tibetan began adding links to its programs on WeChat that Tibetan users have been sharing within their own circles and has received connection requests from over 300 WeChat users as a result.

RFA's Tibetan team has been particularly active in sharing unblocked SoundCloud links and RFA Tibetan TV programming within multiple WeChat groups. RFA's stringers also have been getting videos and photos from inside Tibet using WeChat—including exclusive coverage of illegal fishing in Qinghai Lake, the suicides of three nuns and the demolition of Larung Gar Monastery.



VOA & RFA actively use circumvention technology like VPNs and WeChat to reach Tibetans with news they cannot get from local sources. (Johannes Eisele/AFP)



**Iran:** VOA's Persian Service videos on Telegram, the most popular mobile instant messenger in Iran, resulted in 32,200 new subscribers, a 64 percent increase. On Twitter, VOA Persian has gained 149,000 new followers, a 49.6 percent increase. On Telegram, Radio Farda doubled its subscriptions from 40,000 in January 2016 to 78,000 by the end of the year. On Instagram, Farda had 307,000 followers—a 250 percent increase from the year before.

**Uzbekistan:** Operating in one of the most restrictive environments in the world, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service is using WhatsApp and Telegram to build an innovative citizen reporting network throughout the country. Uzbek citizens frequently send the Service videos, photos, and news tips, which allow it to report on issues that

directly affect people's lives. For example, the Uzbek Service was the first media outlet to receive information on August 27 about Uzbek President Islam Karimov falling severely ill, and the first media to credibly speculate on September 1 about his death, based on persistent citizen reporting of unusual midnight funeral preparations in his hometown.

## CREATING DIGITAL-FIRST CONTENT

### Engaging with Video

**Russia:** Current Time's digital media team broke new ground in the BBG digital sphere, taking the network's content directly to growing mobile and web audiences as a new product for RFE/RL's broadcast region.

The team's clever social media videos on news and current affairs issues were viewed more than 180 million times in 2016 on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Russian social networks such as VKontakte and Odnoklassniki.

One video about Russian President Vladimir Putin's unfulfilled election promises of five years ago became the top trending video on the popular Odnoklassniki social network, receiving more than 5.4 million views across social networks.

On YouTube, RFE/RL garnered almost 334 million views in 2016, representing an 82 percent increase from 2015.

MBN's Facebook pages have seen a dramatic increase in video—both in terms of production as well as consumption. The number of video views on the MBN Facebook pages has grown exponentially since the network started posting videos directly to Facebook pages in May 2015 (rather than simply embedding YouTube videos there). In 2016, MBN had nearly 1.5 billion video views on its combined 21 Facebook pages.



RFE/RL Mashaal Radio's reporter Bashir Gwakh with VOA presenters on Facebook Live on U.S. election day.

**Vietnam:** VOA Vietnamese saw extraordinary video growth on social platforms, with more than 329 million video views across YouTube and Facebook, a 687 percent increase of video views compared to 2015. The service averaged 2.7 million video views weekly on YouTube. Facebook videos have shown significant engagement, averaging almost 99,000 reactions, comments, or shares weekly.

During President Barack Obama's visit to Vietnam in May, the service received nearly five million video views daily on its Facebook page. RFA Vietnamese increased its Facebook fans by 63 percent in FY 2016 and added 12 regular weekly video features for a total of 33 regular features.

**Afghanistan:** In July, VOA Ashna TV was the first media outlet in Afghanistan to stream a live TV program on Facebook. The initiative immediately captured a very large digital audience and generated extensive engagement. The daily one-hour current affairs program in Dari and Pashto languages gets more than 30,000 views and hundreds of reactions on Facebook.

In addition, VOA is extremely competitive with other media outlets on social media. VOA Facebook pages have the largest total audience among media organizations on Facebook in Central Africa, Cambodia and Laos.

“You ask us to share our stories. I have thousands of stories, but I have been waiting for someone that will listen.”

— A WOMAN IN MOSUL POSTED ON RAISE YOUR VOICE FACEBOOK PAGE

### The power of storytelling

**Pakistan:** Radio Mashaal, RFE/RL’s Pashto language service for Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas, captured video of octogenarian Syed Abdul Ghani, who trekked a kilometer every day with 100 kilograms of flour on his back in order to support his family. An English-language version of the video, produced by RFE/RL’s Central Newsroom, received 40 million views on Facebook and led to an outpouring of support for Ghani Baba and his family, and discussions about poverty and social support systems for the elderly in Pakistan.

**China & Region:** RFA launched an online investigative series that showcases such topics as the hazards of illegal gold mines in Myanmar, the vaccine crisis in China and the future of the Mekong River as it gradually falls under China’s control in 2016.

### Interacting with audiences

**Middle East:** MBN has a team of Community Managers for the Raise Your Voice Facebook page engaging in real time with the audience on a 24/7 basis. The Community Managers facilitate conversations, ask questions back to ensure that fruitful discussions are had on the platforms. MBN’s Facebook pages had 56 million interactions (comments, shares or likes) in 2016.

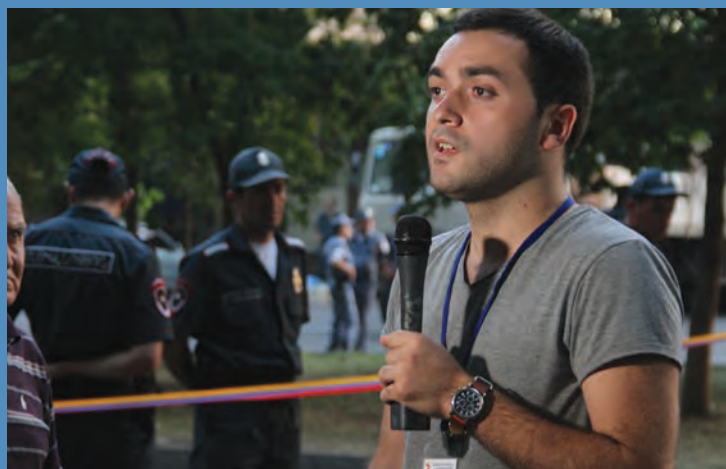
Alhurra’s *Free Hour* is the network’s flagship daily discussion program that addresses the most pressing topic facing the Middle East. In 2016, *Free Hour* hosted its first online digital discussion with Syrian Political Analyst Reem Turkmani about the Geneva Conference on Syria. Instead of having a host moderate a discussion on television, this was an opportunity for viewers to ask the questions directly to the guest using Facebook. The hour-long discussion solicited 130 comments and more than 3700 likes.

**Russia:** The Facebook page of RFE/RL’s Russian Service, Radio Svoboda, had 91,000 engagements (likes, comments and shares) with its users per week, while VOA Russian’s Facebook page had more than 45,000 engagements per week; some of the most popular content was related to stories about America, U.S.-Russia relations, human rights issues within Russia, and other relevant issues from Ukraine to Syria that were misreported by Russian state-funded media.



In December 2016, VOA’s Extremism Watch desk released a special project, “Descent into Jihad,” that tells the story of Rasid Tugral, a young Turk who had transformed from an astronomer to an ISIS fighter. He joined ISIS in Syria and died in August 2016 in a clash with Syrian Kurds. The story was translated into more than 20 languages.

## SPOTLIGHT: COVERING YEREVAN



RFE/RL's Artak Hambardzumyan covers the two-week standoff at a police station in Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia, July 2016. (Sona Kocharyan/RFE/RL)

When armed men stormed a police station in Yerevan, the Armenian Services of VOA and RFE/RL provided comprehensive digital coverage of the two-week standoff. The armed men demanded the release of opposition leader Jirair Sefilian and the resignation of President Serzh Sargsyan, and were supported by thousands of residents, who marched through the streets on July 25.

RFE/RL's Armenian Service, which in 2016 launched 10 hours of daily online TV, provided extensive live TV coverage of the standoff.

The coverage broke records with over 5.6 million visits and 13.1 million page views on the Service's websites in Armenian and Russian, nearly 18.8 million video views on the Service's YouTube channel and 17.7 million video views to Facebook Live and on-demand videos.

The VOA Armenian Service's live coverage online quickly became an important and popular source of information. The Service's website had more than 2.3 million visits and 5.5 million page views over the course of one week; its YouTube channel had 7 million views, and the Service's live stream had more than 1.8 million views.

### Tailoring Content to Audiences

**Russia:** RFE/RL's Tatar-Bashkir and North Caucasus Services launched hyperlocal websites for Russian speakers in their regions in September 2016. The sites target areas particularly vulnerable to disinformation and complement the Services' continuing reporting in Chechen, Tatar and Bashkir languages while extending their reach to new audiences. The Tatar-Bashkir Service hyperlocal website, Idel.Realii, published a social video on police brutality in Tatarstan and authorities' ongoing refusal to investigate the death of a detained citizen in a police station four years ago. RFE/RL was the only local media outlet that raised the issue and the video received more than 50,000 views and more than 1,000 shares on Facebook.



Idel.Realii Facebook Page



**50,000**  
Video Views



**1,000**  
Shares on Facebook



# Enhancing Coordination: A Global Force



Throughout 2016, CEO John F. Lansing and the heads of the BBG networks brought together leaders from across the agency to collaborate on strategic topics like impact and social media. Above: BBG leadership meets to discuss the agency's social media strategy at the 2016 Social Media Summit.

Increased coordination, strategic focus, alignment of financial resources and improved stewardship of taxpayer dollars were a few of the hallmarks of 2016, and they resulted in a stronger, more unified agency with increased global coverage and reach. The International Media Coordinating Committee (ICC), made up of the leaders of each of the networks, hit full stride in 2016, meeting regularly throughout the year and establishing communication systems to improve content sharing and coordination in many target areas.



The International Media Coordinating Committee from left to right: Libby Liu, President of Radio Free Asia; Brian Conniff, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks; Amanda Bennett, Director of the Voice of America; John F. Lansing, CEO of the Broadcasting Board of Governors; Malule González, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting; Thomas Kent, President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.



## Reporting on Russia

Led by RFE/RL and in cooperation with VOA, the Current Time television and digital network represents a unified response to Russian disinformation, with programming aimed at Russian-speaking audiences in countries neighboring Russia—from the Baltics to the Black Sea, and east to Central Asia (more on Current Time on page 47).

In addition to editorial and resource coordination, the VOA and RFE/RL Russian Services jointly conducted high impact VIP interviews in Moscow with the opposition leader Alexei Navalny and with U.S. Ambassador to Russia, John Tefft.

## Covering Violent Extremism

BBG networks share content on a routine basis to offer objective and balanced reporting on the spread of violent extremism and to counter disinformation promulgated by extremist movements. VOA's Extremism Watch Desk shares content in 13 languages with the other BBG networks. Alhurra shared its critically acclaimed series *Delusional Paradise* with the other networks, who are airing and adapting the material. The network also shares interviews and footage dealing with violent extremism from the region with the other BBG entities. RFA's English language site has a section with a robust selection of articles from sister entities on extremist unrest and terrorism.

## East Asia

VOA and RFA conduct weekly content-sharing calls, use each other's original reports when appropriate, and have limited cross-linking of website content. During the U.S. elections, editors and managers from both networks exchanged coverage plans daily, and the networks coordinated broadcast schedules to maximize coverage and dissemination of news on Election Day.

VOA Khmer and RFA Khmer journalists meet quarterly, twice per year in Washington and twice per year

in Cambodia, to discuss news developments and trends in Cambodia and share thoughts about coverage.

## Iran

VOA and RFE/RL coordinated Persian language coverage on major issues including the U.S.-led international effort to fight ISIS, the conflict in Syria, major speeches and statements by President Obama and Secretary Kerry, Democratic and Republican National Conventions, and key congressional hearings, always with a strong emphasis on human rights and women's rights issues in Iran. Additionally, a reporter from Radio Farda appeared as a weekly guest commentator on VOA's *New Horizon* show.

## Cuba

OCB and VOA Spanish greatly increased their cooperation and coverage coordination on multiple fronts by sharing reports, staff and facilities to cover special events to mutual benefit. Collaboration included VOA reporters filing to OCB from the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, and OCB sharing facilities, equipment and studio space in Miami with visiting VOA reporters, including from the VOA Creole Service. Furthermore, OCB produces a weekly Venezuela-related program that airs both on OCB and the VOA Latin America satellite feed.

## Afghanistan/Pakistan

In addition to their now-routine collaboration on news coverage, VOA and RFE/RL expanded coordination in 2016 to include a joint seminar on the current and future status of media in Afghanistan; extensive shared coverage of key events, including the NATO summit and Orlando massacre; close coordination on the shared Kabul bureau; and joint journalism trainings and exchange fellowships.

## Ukraine

In 2016, VOA and RFE/RL Ukrainian services successfully collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on a joint polio outbreak response in Ukraine. Both CDC officers and Ukrainian officials, tasked with the polio eradication, sent thank you notes and highly praised VOA and RFE/RL collaboration and contribution to the awareness campaign to eradicate the disease.

## Middle East

MBN regularly uses VOA reports within its primetime newscasts, *The Global* and *The World Today*, on topics such as fighting in the Syrian city of Manbij; a Muslim police officer in New York who is considered a hero for driving a vehicle suspected of containing explosives away from a crowd; Muslim-American volunteerism; and ISIS's practice of slavery.

Alhurra aired VOA's *Faith in Freedom: The Journey of Muslim American Candidates*. The 30-minute documentary serves as a catalyst for conversation as it follows four Muslim-Americans running for public office. *Faith in Freedom* gives target audiences a firsthand look at local politics and democracy in action within the United States.

The BBG's networks provided a front-row seat to the historic 2016 U.S. presidential elections. From the Iowa Caucus, through the primaries all the way to Election Day, the BBG networks worked together to bring the full American democratic experience to targeted audiences abroad.



When Alhurra's *Raise Your Voice* interviewed U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry about the fight against ISIS and the future of the Middle East, the interview was shared with all other networks. VOA and RFE/RL included it in stories posted on their websites.

## COVERING THE 2016 ELECTIONS

VOA invited American voters from various diaspora communities to watch the presidential debates and share their reactions. VOA Spanish service's Angelica Herrera interviewed the panelists which included foreign-born Americans from Cambodia, China, Greece, Ukraine, Somalia, Cameroon, Egypt, and Lebanon.



### Primaries

For millions around the world, BBG networks served as the only source of unbiased coverage. VOA, in effect, served as a U.S. bureau for its sister networks RFE/RL, OCB and RFA, sharing its coverage of the candidates and the intricacies of the election process. VOA, Alhurra and Radio Sawa provided live coverage of Trump's and Clinton's acceptance speeches with simultaneous translation in Farsi, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish and Arabic.

### General Election

Even in the most restrictive media environments, VOA's election coverage generated intense response, including dramatic increases in social media activity. VOA Chinese recorded sharp spikes in YouTube engagement and comments on Election Day. Alhurra, Radio Sawa and their respective digital properties garnered reaction from Arab-Americans as well as interviews with people in the Middle East following the three presidential debates.

### Election Day

VOA's around-the-clock coverage included live reporting as returns came in, details from journalists across the country, and interactives and video packages explaining the intricacies of the U.S. political system. RFE/RL produced an election countdown timer and an interactive electoral map that showed real-time total and per-state results. It was localized for 17 RFE/RL language services as well as Arabic for Alhurra.

*Current Time* television and digital network offered its audience eight hours of live Russian-language coverage on election night, including simultaneous translation of President-elect Donald Trump's acceptance speech. The first five hours of *Current Time*'s election coverage were produced by VOA. RFE/RL correspondents then took up the marathon, with two hours of live coverage from Prague and Moscow.

Alhurra Television coverage started at 7 a.m. on Election Day and continued live for more than 24 hours. Correspondents throughout the Middle East and North



“Our unbounded thanks for all the support you provided us throughout the election’s coverage. You were a critical part in our broadcasting.”

— NCDN NEWS DIRECTOR WROTE TO VOA SPANISH



Top: Alhurra’s Danny Farkas shoots a Facebook Live feed with correspondents Michel Ghandour (left) and Joe Tabet at the Republican National Convention.

Middle: VOA Persian’s Arash Sigarchi reports the incoming election results on-air on election night.

Bottom: Alhurra TV provided audiences in the Middle East with comprehensive coverage from around the U.S., including from Dearborn, Michigan, on Election Day.

Africa spoke to people and experts on their expectations for the president-elect and gathered reaction to the Trump victory. Alhurra aired key remarks and speeches live, with simultaneous translation of Donald Trump’s acceptance and Hillary Clinton’s concession speech, as well as a profile video, “Who Is Donald Trump?” introducing the newly elected President.

Alhurra’s coverage was also simultaneously translated and broadcast on the popular Egyptian network “Cairo and the People,” expanding the number of Egyptians that were exposed to unbiased coverage during Election Day.

TV and Radio Martí aired more than 20 hours of live continuous coverage and 24-hour live blogging. As part of their coverage, Radio and TV Martí interviewed Cuban immigrants who were voting for the first time and supplemented their coverage with content produced by VOA’s

Spanish Service.

Even though the Chinese authorities barred live coverage of the vote-counting process in the U.S., RFA’s Mandarin Service coverage attracted widespread attention in China, especially online.

### Providing Coverage to Affiliates Around the World

VOA provided affiliates around the world with exclusive reporting.

VOA Burmese produced three 30-minute election specials for affiliate Skynet TV, the largest private satellite TV provider in Burma; VOA Indonesian provided more than 50 reports for TV and radio, including for CNN Indonesia; and VOA Spanish provided 151 live reports—a new record for the service—to affiliates in 17 countries throughout Latin America.





# Increasing Curation

BBG is committed to providing audiences with exceptional and relevant programming. To enhance and augment the original programming of its networks, BBG invests in third-party content producers through curation, acquisition and co-productions that highlight new and original formats, particularly for social and mobile platforms.



**"Chut Wutty's life was cut short but his legacy of fighting to protect Cambodia's rainforests lives on. Cambodian authorities' decision to deny a public screening of this documentary about him and the ongoing struggle only reinforces its relevance."** — LIBBY LIU, PRESIDENT OF RADIO FREE ASIA





Top: *Be Our Guest* with Zurab Dvali is produced and hosted by one of RFE/RL's Georgian Service journalists and also airs on the Current Time digital television network.

Bottom: Dr. Isabel Gómez-Bassols, a Cuban-born psychologist and best-selling author, is the host of *Dra. Isabel*, a self-help talk show produced by Hispanic Communications Network (HCN)-La Red Hispana and began airing on Radio Martí in July 2016.

Left: Chut Wutty, Director of the Natural Resource Protection Group and anti-logging activist, walks at Botum Sakor National Park in the Koh Kong province of Cambodia. RFA made the documentary "I am Chut Wutty" available on its website after Cambodian authorities banned its screening in the country. (Samrang Pring/Reuters)

## Documentaries

BBG networks curate world-class quality documentaries from major broadcasters and independent producers worldwide, including PBS, CBS, BBC, Bloomberg, ITN, National Geographic, A&E, and Discovery. The programs are customized with language dubbing, subtitling and on-screen graphic translation. Topics complement news presentations, provide context to the daily headlines and call attention to noteworthy annual events such as Arab-American Heritage Month, World AIDS Day, Global Entrepreneurship Week, Hajj, International Youth Day, Ramadan, World Refugee Day, the 9/11 anniversary, and International Women's Day.

In 2016, Alhurra launched "Alhurra Files," a collection of independent programs that address issues including political strife, terrorism, inequality, and cross-cultural conflict.

In late April, RFA's Khmer Service made available on its website a documentary about a murdered Cambodian environmental activist. The film, "I Am Chut Wutty," was banned by Cambodian authorities from being publicly screened in the country. A Facebook post, directing people to watch the video on the RFA Khmer website, was shared more than 30,000 times, with more than 600 comments and half a million reactions—with Cambodians discussing the documentary's subject and sharing concerns about media freedoms declining in their country. Almost 500,000 people clicked the link to the RFA Khmer website.

## News and Entertainment

Voice of America airs a variety of news and information programs such as PBS's *NewsHour*, *America's Heartland* and *MotorWeek*, as well as weekly features from the National Science Foundation. In 2016, VOA's Persian Service expanded its prime-time programming with acquired content including Farsi-versioned Bloomberg TV shows, such as the award-winning *Brink*, *Game Changers*, *C-Suite*, and *Inside Series*.

In July, Radio Martí began broadcasting the nationally syndicated call-in radio program *Dra. Isabel*. Hosted by Cuban-born psychologist and best-selling author Dr. Isabel Gómez-Bassols, known to listeners as "The Angel of the Radio," the daily self-help talk show takes live calls and emails from Martí's audience in Cuba.

RFE/RL's Current Time digital television network curates content from regional partners, including the travel show *Be Our Guest with Zurab Dvali*, *Baltic Week*, and *Business Plan*. RFE/RL also commissions an automotive show and a science show from Deutsche Welle, and airs documentaries produced throughout its target region.

RFE/RL's Balkan series "Perspektiva," which looks at the lives of young people and their problems, is produced by a local media company and supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The show airs on more than 30 TV partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia.

Alhurra's news magazines series *Focus* and *To Know* repackages selected segments from *PBS NewsHour*, *CBS 60 Minutes*, and *CBS Sunday Morning*, and dubs them into Arabic.

# Targeting Resources

## Cuba

Freedom House has long catalogued Cuba as the Western Hemisphere’s most restrictive environment for information and communication technologies, with one of the lowest internet penetration rates in the world. Despite improved relations with the U.S, severe media restrictions continue. The United Nations recently declared internet access as a basic human right; Cuba opposed the move.

## Areas Affected by Violent Extremism

Extremist groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram and Al Qaeda restrict access to information, instill fear and intimidation among local populations and propagate disinformation. For those living under their control, access to credible news and information is more important than ever. In 2016, BBG networks engaged youth and provided accurate and unbiased information in areas affected by violent extremism.

## Sub-Saharan Africa

Although sub-Saharan Africa was not explicitly named as one of the top five priorities, the work that BBG broadcasters do there is significant. According to Freedom House, 94 percent of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have a Partly Free or Not Free media environment. VOA broadcasts in more than a dozen languages throughout the region, providing what is often the only source of unbiased news and information.

BBG is prioritizing resources to ensure that its activities are advancing U.S. foreign policy priorities and national security interests. To this end, the BBG is targeting its resources strategically to address the information needs of audiences in Russia and the post-Soviet space, China and areas affected by Chinese activities, Iran, and Cuba, as well as those facing violent extremism.

## Russia

Freedom House has described Russia as an “innovator of modern state propaganda.” Indeed, the Kremlin tightly controls domestic news and runs massive misinformation campaigns targeting audiences along its periphery. In 2016, VOA and RFE/RL provided audiences in this area with credible, factual, and locally relevant journalism as alternatives to these lies and disinformation.

## China

China has one of the world’s most restrictive media environments, with rampant censorship and internet restrictions. Voice of America and Radio Free Asia are vital sources of uncensored information throughout China, especially on forbidden topics such as government corruption, religious freedom, political dissent, the crackdown on free speech, online censorship, environmental pollution and human rights for Tibetans and ethnic Uyghurs.

## Iran

VOA and RFE/RL target urban youth who are politically savvy and active online, providing platforms for free thought and debate not tolerated in the local media. VOA’s Persian Service works to fight misperceptions and stereotypes about the U.S. and provide balanced international news, while RFE/RL’s Radio Farda helps audiences better understand Iran and the region in order to build a better life.



# Countering Violent Extremism





Extremist groups such as ISIS and Al Qaeda restrict access to information, instill fear and intimidation among local populations and propagate disinformation. For those living under their control, access to credible news and information is more important than ever. In 2016, BBG networks engaged youth and provided accurate and unbiased information in areas affected by violent extremism.

Right: Iraqi men who have fled fighting between militants and Iraqi forces in Mosul are sequestered at a collection point in Gogjali, Iraq. During their rule of Mosul, ISIS brutally purged whole sectors of the once multicultural city, targeting Kurds, Shiite and Christians, hunting down former police and soldiers in their homes and hanging anyone caught with a mobile phone from lampposts. (Nish Nalbandian/AP)

Left: An Iraqi man who fled the fighting between Iraqi security forces and ISIS militants listens to a radio at a camp for internally displaced people in Khazir near Mosul, Iraq. (Hadi Mizban/AP)



“I live under the control of ISIS here in Hawija. I go to the upper floor to listen and participate in [Raise Your Voice call-in radio show]. If Daesh catches me they will kill me.”

— CALL-IN RADIO LISTENER

### **Raise Your Voice**

MBN’s *Raise Your Voice* campaign continued to amplify and provide a platform for moderate voices to disavow extremism through television, radio, and digital (web, social, mobile). *Raise Your Voice* encourages Iraqi citizens to speak out and address extremism and the underlying causes of terrorism. By identifying and discussing the issues ISIS is exploiting, Iraqis can propose solutions that will ultimately undermine ISIS’s narrative.

The *Raise Your Voice* social media properties, call-in radio and television shows, and television programming provide forums for activists, youth and others to share their ideas on topics such as sectarian relationships, religious freedom and freedom of expression. New Alhurra programming offers powerful personal testimonies that reveal the realities of life in ISIS territory and the pain and suffering ISIS inflicts on families and communities.

The *Raise Your Voice* digital component amplifies moderate voices addressing the underlying issues that lead to extremism, such as unemployment, religious intolerance and lack of rights for women and minorities. The social media properties encourage interaction and engagement from Iraq and across the region. Community managers provoke and moderate discussion on social media platforms.

The *Raise Your Voice* television and radio call-in shows serve as a platform to discuss and debate the effects of terrorism, extremism and intolerance. The daily radio call-in show and weekly television call-in show invite discourse with the hosts, guests in Baghdad, and each other. Other television programs showcase local acts of heroism in confronting these challenging times; offer the view from Northern Iraq; profile families who have had their lives changed by ISIS; and provide a platform for the perspectives of NGOs, Iraqi students, and



*Kurdvizyon*, a television program produced by VOA's Kurdish Service, provides the latest news on ISIS, Iraq and Turkey, and covers critical issues across the region and the United States. Veteran journalists Mutlu Civiroglu and Ruken Isik host the broadcast in the Kurmanji dialect.

academia on current challenges and the future.

MBN is directly working to counter violent extremism, its ideology and messaging through its *Raise Your Voice* campaign. As a result of its established credibility, MBN is poised to play a critical role in the growth of civil society and counter extremist ideology and misinformation.

According to surveys from international research organizations such as Gallup, 44 percent of all Alhurra viewers in Iraq say they saw something on the television network that led them to think differently about ISIS.

### VOA Kurdish

VOA Kurdish developed new television programming focused on US policies toward the region, addressed ISIS disinformation in collaboration with key affiliates in northern Iraq and Turkey, and expanded Kurdish social media content for its web and Facebook sites. As a result, VOA Kurdish Facebook likes have increased by more than 600 percent in FY 2016, and the service has experienced audience growth in Iraqi Kurdistan.

### Extremism Watch Desk

In 2016, VOA's Extremism Watch Desk developed content that dispels the myths associated with ISIS. The Desk is staffed with writers proficient in 13 languages who work closely with VOA's language services to adapt stories

for worldwide radio, television and social media distribution. The site monitors extremism-related news around the world and takes an in-depth look at the stories behind the headlines.

### Salafism in the Balkans

RFE/RL's Balkan Service reported in 2016 on a rising tide of extremists from Kosovo and Bosnia traveling to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS. Kosovo is considered the biggest per capita source of foreign fighters in Europe.

The Salafist communities producing these fighters are closed to any kind of media presence. RFE/RL's Balkan Service broke through the isolation, convincing Bosnian Salafis to talk about their lives and their community for a 30-minute documentary that aired in September 2016 on 30 TV stations in Bosnia.

In October 2016, the Balkan Service also reported on two former foreign fighters opening a tolerance center in Pristina to prevent anyone else from going to fight alongside ISIS.

VOA's Albanian and Bosnian services covered the full spectrum of the Balkans' exposure to extremism. A VOA stringer also captured exclusive coverage of Salafis living in the village of Gornja Maoca, a Balkan hotbed of extremism—he was the only journalist to have spent a night there.

### Fighting Stereotypes

The VOA Urdu Service's hit show *Not Your Ordinary Imam* presents American imams who shatter stereotypes. Featured imams include one who has become incredibly popular with youth, another who ensures that his mosque and its services are open to non-Muslims, and a third who coaches youth in boxing to keep them off the crime-ridden streets of their Philadelphia neighborhoods.

*Raise Your Voice* tackled the topic of stereotypes weekly, and featured compelling interviews, such as Aicha al-Saadi, a high school student in Texas, who talked about her experience

## SPOTLIGHT: THE INVISIBLE ENEMY

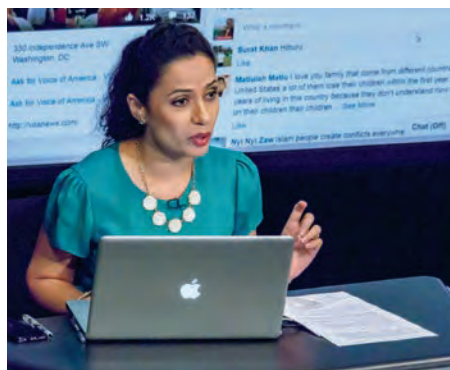
In 2016 Alhurra Television produced *The Invisible Enemy*, a three-part documentary series that took an in-depth look at what Moroccan citizens are doing to counter violent extremism.

The documentary series examines the role that Morocco plays in the regional and international fight against terrorism and how government and community leaders are taking steps to eradicate the roots of terrorism in the North African country. *The Invisible Enemy* follows key members of Moroccan society as they address what they are doing to fight extremist ideologies. This includes the founder of the cultural center in Sidi Moumen, a region of Casablanca known for producing extremists. The series also interviews a boxing coach from Casablanca, a Sheikh of the Salafi movement and experts in Islamic studies.

*The Invisible Enemy* is the latest Alhurra production that focuses on countering violent extremism. The network's award-winning documentary series *Delusional Paradise*, examined life under ISIS and the destruction it has created across the region.



Zinab Haidara, a Moroccan preacher, in Alhurra Television's *The Invisible Enemy*. The three-part documentary follows key members of Moroccan society as they address fighting extremist ideologies.



VOA Urdu's Sarah Zaman reads a comment from Facebook during the live-streamed panel discussion Being Young & Muslim in America—a cross-media conversation that involved audiences from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Somalia.

wearing the headscarf. Alhurra also aired an examination of the most prevalent stereotypes about Muslims in America that included an interview with a Muslim radio host who spoke about common misconceptions that fuel Islamophobia and hostility.

### Special Reporting

During 2016, RFE/RL's Afghan Service (Radio Azadi) remained a leading credible source of news, reporting, analysis and debates in Afghanistan on the atrocities committed by ISIS. Radio Azadi produced more than 130 reports on the terrorist group's activities and attacks and received hundreds of messages, phone calls and comments about its reporting.

In early 2016 the Radio Azadi's ISIS coverage concentrated on the eastern Nangarhar Province, where government forces and local volunteers fought hard to reclaim parts of the six districts lost to ISIS extremists in 2015. After ISIS was chased out of Nangarhar, Radio Azadi led Afghan media in reporting on the new ISIS safe havens in the eastern Kunar and Nuristan Provinces.

RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal continuously demonstrates its impact as a critical source of news and an alternative to extremist propaganda for Pashtuns in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In October 2016, through its vast contact network, Mashaal was first to receive and air a letter from the former head of the Afghan Taliban's head of Qatar office, Sayed Taib Agha, which called upon Taliban leadership to end activities in Pakistan and to cease the destruction of public properties. This story was also quoted by more than 20 western media outlets, including the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

In December, VOA Somali sent a reporter to Columbus, OH to cover the aftermath of the attack at Ohio State University in which a Somali-born student injured 11 people. The reporter visited the largest Somali mosque in Columbus, and reported on community leaders and parents' efforts against online extremism and efforts to radicalize and recruit their children.



# Responding to Misinformation in Russia

Freedom House has described Russia as an “innovator of modern state propaganda.” Indeed, the Kremlin tightly controls domestic news and runs massive misinformation campaigns targeting audiences along its periphery. In 2016, VOA and RFE/RL provided audiences in the region with credible, factual and locally relevant journalism as alternatives to the state-sponsored lies and half-truths.





Current Time journalist Shahida Tulaganova reports from Moscow.

Left: In November, RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service was given exclusive access to sites inside the contaminated Chernobyl nuclear plant before they are sealed in a 31,000-ton containment structure. From left: journalist Tetiana Yakubovych, cameraman Volodymyr Pautov, and journalist Yevhen Solonyna. (RFE/RL)

## Current Time

Led by RFE/RL in cooperation with VOA, the Current Time digital network is a signature 2016 accomplishment of the BBG, providing millions of Russian-speaking viewers in Russia, neighboring countries, and around the world with informed and up-close TV coverage of major news and events that are not reported, or are misreported, elsewhere. The network focuses foremost on news, but also offers a rich mix of feature and entertainment programming that underscores the values of free and open societies.

RFE/RL produces the daily news shows *Current Time Europe* and *Current Time Asia*; top-of-the-hour briefs; a daily political talk show, *The Timur Olevsky Hour*; a fact-checking show, *See Both Sides*, which juxtaposes video reports produced by pro-Kremlin media outlets with those distributed by Western media on the same events; and a feature program on Russia's unheralded places and people, *Unknown Russia*. The channel also includes selected programming from RFE/RL's Russian, Moldovan, and Ukrainian Services, as well as content produced by Current Time regional affiliates and by outside producers.

VOA's *Current Time America* is a daily, hour-long Russian-language newscast providing news headlines, in-depth interviews with newsmakers, features focusing on American life, thought and institutions, and American official and expert perspectives on developments and issues of interest to the target audience.

Current Time's television content is complemented by a strong digital reporting unit that engages and connects with Russian-speaking audiences via all major social media platforms, including producing platform-specific reporting for digital as well as expanding the reach of Current Time TV products. (More information on Current Time digital can be found on page 31.)

Current Time's programming is accurate, factual, timely and entertaining—a reality check on disinformation that drives conflict and distrust.

## Russian programming

Voice of America expanded its fact-based programming in Russian, including business and finance programming from New York and production of America's stories in several virtual bureaus throughout the United States. The investment also strengthened the Service's ability to provide live coverage for Russian-language affiliates, including for the first time a major TV station in Belarus. Resources were added for expansion of VOA Russian digital media efforts, coverage of breaking news developments and creation of social video products designed to address misreporting about America. These included *Briefing*, a daily digest of stories trending on American social media platforms, and *Lexicon*, a digital series explaining U.S. political process and vocabulary.

“Ukrainians who want to learn more about real life in Russia can draw information from [*Current Time*]. In programs like *Unknown Russia*, *Signs of Life*, and *Russia & Me*, it's possible to see the real, and not fabricated, country.”

— INNA DOLZHENKOVA, IN AN ARTICLE FOR DETECTOR MEDIA



Making dramatic strides in video production in 2016, RFE/RL's Russian Service produced more than 40 short documentaries for its new *Signs of Life* video series. Supported by superior production values, the series features compelling human-interest stories and demonstrates how politics touches Russians' everyday lives. Ten short films from the series were shown at the ArtDocFest international documentary film festival in Moscow.

Additionally, to mark the 25th anniversary since the collapse of the USSR, RFE/RL's Russian Service, in partnership with RFE/RL's Ukrainian, Georgian and Kyrgyz Services, produced the video documentary *After the Empire*, a compilation of five personal stories from throughout the former Soviet Union.

### Central Asia

In late 2015, RFE/RL launched an experimental newswire in the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek and Russian languages for Central Asia, to provide objective and easily republishable news items to media outlets seeking content in the region. In 2016, more than 700 media outlets and media professionals

subscribed to the service. Expanding RFE/RL's partnership network in the region allows RFE/RL to help foster a positive, pluralistic information environment in a region otherwise subject to extremist and anti-democratic media.

### Ukraine

VOA Ukrainian launched *Chat-Time*, a digital first extension of its signature TV program, *Chas-Time*. Three days a week, VOA Ukrainian reporters and TV hosts offer explainers and interviews with VIP newsmakers, and guide viewers through the most important news developments. By leveraging Facebook Live to provide verified and credible news to a wider and younger audience, VOA reaches 5.4 million adults in Ukraine every week.

In January 2016, RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service launched a daily, one-hour radio show for the occupied Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. The broadcast, called *Radio Donbas Realii*, was first streamed online and via satellite; in February, the program started to air on FM waves via radio towers and, in July, also via mobile transmitters sponsored by the Ukrainian government.



In March 2016, RFE/RL video journalist Marian Kushnir traveled to the Donetsk region near the frontline and spoke to Ukrainian Army soldiers and local residents. (Andriy Dubchak/RFE/RL)



## SPOTLIGHT: POLYGRAPH.INFO

“It separates fact from fiction, adds context, and debunks lies, blunting the destructive effects of disinformation and helping audiences make informed choices and decisions.”

– VOA DIRECTOR AMANDA BENNETT



With disinformation and misinformation extending their global reach in 2016, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty teamed up to offer a new fact-checking resource. Polygraph.info, a globally aware and nonpartisan website, is a timely response to the deluge of often false or misleading information confounding audiences around the world.

“Polygraph.info addresses the public demand for professionally verified information, and will power a range of RFE/RL and VOA news coverage that will report the truth,” said RFE/RL President Thomas Kent.

Polygraph.info’s team of RFE/RL and VOA journalists researches and analyzes statements from government officials and other high-profile individuals to assess their veracity. The site currently focuses on statements involving relations between Russia and the West, but its analysis will expand to other areas of the world.

### Georgia

RFE/RL’s Georgian Service, in cooperation with Georgian public television, launched a weekly TV show entitled *InterVIEW*, which features hard-hitting 30-minute interviews with politicians and newsmakers, including the speaker of parliament, several cabinet ministers, former PM and billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. In the run-up to the October 8 elections in Georgia, the show ran twice a week as Georgian public television’s main election program and featured interviews with the leaders of all political parties competing in the election.

VOA Georgian reached 8.1 percent of the country’s adults weekly, having expanded its special live TV interactives with three major national networks. The weekly programs provided U.S. perspectives on Russia’s regional aggression, including interviews with U.S. Congress members, think tanks, and more.

### The Balkans

VOA’s Balkan services significantly expanded their coverage across broadcast and digital platforms focusing on Russian propaganda in the region. VOA Serbian produced a documentary series about the Kremlin’s influence in Serbia.

RFE/RL’s Balkan Service investigated and produced a documentary project about Russia’s deployment of its “soft power” in Serbia, in order to prevent the country’s accession into the European Union and demonize cooperation with NATO. Follow-up reporting included an exclusive story that confirmed links between officials in Moscow and two people of Serbian origin accused of organizing the attempted coup in Montenegro on October 16, 2016.

# Reporting the Truth in Iran

VOA and RFE/RL target urban youth who are politically savvy and active online, providing platforms for free thought and debate not tolerated in the local media. VOA's Persian Service works to fight misperceptions and stereotypes about the U.S. and provide balanced international news, while RFE/RL's Radio Farda helps audiences better understand Iran and the region in order to build a better life.



## Comprehensive Coverage

**Nuclear Pact:** In January, the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty provided timely and comprehensive multi-platform coverage in Farsi of the historic nuclear pact between Iran and six world powers and the near-simultaneous news of the prisoner swap between the United States and Iran.



Above: VOA Persian Service's Setareh Derakhshesh talks to *Washington Post* Editor Martin Baron about journalist Jason Rezaian's release from Iran after being imprisoned for 545 days.

Left: Iranian youth are tech-savvy and engaged with online content including social media, online gaming and censored news sources. BBG networks provide a range of circumvention tools that help Iranians access the internet freely. (Atta Kenare/AFP)

**Hostage Exchange:** VOA's Persian Service was the first international broadcaster with news in Farsi of Iran releasing four Iranian-American nationals, including *Washington Post* reporter Jason Rezaian, former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati and pastor Saeed Abedini, in exchange for seven Iranian nationals.

As the freed Americans were flying home, VOA Persian broadcast exclusive interviews with Ali Rezaian, Jason Rezaian's brother; Naghmeh Abedini, Saeed Abedini's sister; and Sarah Hekmati, Amir Hekmati's sister. VOA also aired statements from Michigan Congressman Dan Kildee and other U.S. lawmakers, and carried a live interview with John Limbert, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran and a U.S. prisoner during the Iran Hostage Crisis nearly four decades ago.

After the former detainees had safely returned to the United States, VOA Persian aired an exclusive interview with Marty Baron, Executive Editor of the *Washington Post*, on the unjustified imprisonment of Jason Rezaian who

spent 545 days in Evin Prison in Iran. As part of the prisoner swap coverage, VOA Persian also aired an exclusive interview with Dan Levinson, the son of the former FBI agent Robert Levinson, to inform and remind the audiences in Iran that Robert Levinson was still missing and is reportedly being held in Iranian prison.

In addition to its extensive coverage of the developments, Radio Farda provided analysis and conducted interviews with Middle East experts, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer and the founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran. Radio Farda also made available on its website President Obama's message to the Iranian people and shared that piece together with the State Department's video of the president's statement on its Facebook page.

## Digital First Strategy

In 2016, VOA Persian implemented a digital-first strategy with particular focus on producing short digital videos for web, as well as for Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Telegram. Through Facebook Live, VOA Persian became the only international digital broadcaster to offer Iranian audiences direct, unfiltered access to President-elect Donald Trump's victory speech on Election Day and to the concession speech by Hillary Clinton the day after on Facebook. Live video coverage on Facebook included President Obama's farewell address to the nation; acceptance speeches by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton at the Republican and Democratic Conventions; numerous speeches and press conferences by the U.S. President, the U.S. Secretary of State and more than a dozen live Congressional hearings on pressing foreign policy issues held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee.



### Cross-Network Coordination

Having established a permanent content exchange mechanism with Radio Farda in Prague, VOA Persian shared content with Radio Farda including a live broadcast of President Obama's State of the Union address with simultaneous translation, a photo gallery of exclusive pictures by a VOA Persian Europe-based stringer after the Brussels airport bomb attack, as well as exclusive pictures for web and social media taken by VOA Persian reporting teams on the floor at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland and at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

### Covering Anti-Semitism in Iran

In 2016, VOA Persian also continued to expose the persistent problem of state-sanctioned anti-Semitism in Iran. When the government supported a "Holocaust Cartoon Contest," VOA partnered with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to take the lead among the Persian-speaking international media in covering the international condemnation of the contest. VOA Persian aired strong statements made exclusively to VOA Persian by Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt, Ranking Member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee Congressman Eliot Engel, Director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Initiative on Holocaust Denial Tad Stahnke and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's foreign media spokesperson David Keyes, among others.

### New Programming

Radio Farda launched a new radio and digital program called *Taboo*, which discusses controversial subjects inside Iran. The program, which has generated a high level of engagement, provides a forum to discuss topics that would otherwise be considered taboo in Iran's Islamic society, including issues related to Islam's effect on people's individual lifestyles.

In 2016, VOA updated its Persian prime-time television lineup with a fresh look and new Farsi language programming targeting millennials. The new television program *New Horizon with Payam Yazdian* focuses on international issues and is the first of four new weekly programs under one umbrella—*New Horizon*—each focusing on the rapidly changing issues affecting Iran and the world, including women's and minorities' rights, and the fight against ISIS.

Each evening *New Horizon* is followed by a new Farsi-language documentary series produced by Bloomberg Television, topics of which include successful business practices and entrepreneurship, as well as science and technology.

Radio Farda also produced and aired a 45-minute video documentary about interrogation techniques in Iranian prisons, focusing on the experiences of political and civic activists, and transformed its daily *Breakfast With News* radio show into a television program, which airs on VOA's Persian satellite stream.



VOA Persian's *Tablet* looks at the latest in political news. Masih Alinejad, an investigative journalist and a recipient of the 2015 Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy Award, hosts the show. She is also a founder of the group "My Stealthy Freedom," which supports the rights of Iranian women to choose whether to wear the hijab.

## SPOTLIGHT: EXPOSING CORRUPTION

In October 2016, VOA's Persian Service broke the story that Saeed Toosi, Iran's most celebrated Quran reciter, had raped seven of his underage students, and that the regime had covered it up.



Based on verified documents and first-hand interviews with several victims, VOA Persian produced two exclusive investigative reports about Mr. Toosi, who had been considered Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's favorite Quran reader. The investigative reporting revealed that the attacks happened over the course of seven years.

Families of the victims, who were aged 12-14 years, alleged that their complaints were covered up by the Revolutionary Guard's judicial authorities under direct orders from Khamenei's office.

VOA's reporting created a media storm inside and outside Iran, and several international media outlets including the BBC, *The Independent*, Al-Arabia TV and *The Guardian* acknowledged the impact of VOA's reporting in Iranian internal politics.

Although YouTube and Facebook are regularly blocked in Iran, the digital video of the reports quickly reached 505,000 views. Social media quickly filled with news about the case, and Mr. Toosi complained that after the VOA reports, he lost all credibility and was afraid to leave home to buy groceries.

The Combatant Clergy Association, one of the biggest political factions of Iran, held an extraordinary session regarding Mr. Toosi's case, and the central council of Hezbollah requested the disgraced cleric receive severe punishment.

“Victims then went public, speaking to Voice of America’s Persian TV network after their calls for justice fell on deaf ears in the Iranian judiciary.”

— *THE GUARDIAN*, “IRAN ROCKED BY ABUSE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST TOP QUR’AN RECITER,” OCTOBER 26, 2016.

# Overcoming Censorship in China

China has one of the world's most restrictive media environments, with rampant censorship and internet restrictions. Voice of America and Radio Free Asia are a vital source of uncensored information throughout China, especially on forbidden topics including the financial system, environmental pollution and human rights for Tibetans and ethnic Uyghurs.





## Expanded TV Offerings

Radio Free Asia expanded its television programming in 2016, with the goal of improving the quality of programming and offering a greater variety of interesting topics covered within each program. Its Mandarin Service broadcasts a daily half-hour news show and a weekly half-hour show for satellite distribution into China, as well as a selection of short social media-styled videos for audiences on Facebook and YouTube.

VOA's Mandarin Service launched a daily one-hour TV program, *Eye on America*, featuring news and analysis focused on the U.S. and its relations with China. The call in show, *Issues and Opinions*, expanded its congressional engagement by increasing dialogue between its audience and senior U.S. officials.

## Interactive Programming

VOA's Mandarin Service produced more than 40 online, interactive lectures on China's most popular social media platform, WeChat. The lectures covered American elections, the U.S. Constitution, labor movements, and U.S.-China relations. These lectures were conducted through the WeChat groups of the prestigious Peking University and Tsinghua University, and

were simultaneously shared with more than 100 WeChat groups, each with 250–500 members.

VOA's Mandarin Service also hosts an unbranded video channel on Youku (the Chinese equivalent of YouTube), featuring videos on American culture and society. The channel registered 3.3 million views in 2016, totaling over 15 million minutes of content viewing.

For the 50th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, RFA's Mandarin TV team produced an in-depth series on the historic events. The series included a televised discussion with young people inside China using WeChat. The youth, most of whom knew little or nothing about the Cultural Revolution, asked questions of an expert located in RFA's D.C. studio. One young man submitted his question from Tiananmen Square with the Mao portrait in the background.

In September, RFA published an e-book that highlights the struggles and challenges faced by China's workers during the country's dramatic economic rise. *China's Workers Wronged* is based on 88 interviews with Chinese workers, the stories of whom are censored out of Chinese state media and underreported in Western media.

In December, RFA launched a multimedia investigative web series examining the impact of China's rapid

Left: Commuters look at their mobile phones as they wait in line for a bus after finishing work in Hong Kong. (Anthony Wallace/AFP)

Right (from left to right): VOA's Paris Huang interviews U.S. Congressman Ted Lieu on *Issues and Opinions*, February 2016.



development on the Mekong River and the communities downstream. *A River in Peril: The Mekong Under China's Control* tells the story of Southeast Asia's longest river, on which more than 60 million depend for their food, drinking water and livelihoods.

### Uncensored Coverage

RFA and VOA were often the only source of information of stories of activists and asylum seekers gone missing. RFA investigated the whereabouts of two Chinese asylum seekers who were missing after having been forcibly repatriated from Thailand in November 2015. After RFA reported this story in May 2016, the Chinese authorities confirmed their detention in Chongqing days later.

In November, RFA reported on several prominent rights activists who had gone missing or were detained. Rights lawyer Jiang Tianyong, 45, went missing and is believed to be detained after he traveled to Hunan province to meet with relatives of lawyers detained in a nationwide crackdown in 2015. Liu Feiyue, founder of the Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch website, is being held under criminal detention on subversion charges. He has been incommunicado since November. And activist Xie Dan, who had planned to run as an independent candidate

in upcoming local elections, was also detained in November.

RFA and VOA are frequently cited or picked up by official Chinese media outlets, sometimes provoking responses. In April, VOA broadcast an interview with a Chinese manicurist who compared her experiences in the U.S. and China; the story was picked up by the popular Chinese internet portal Sohu, generating over 80,000 engagements. The widely-disseminated report prompted a reply in the official party newspaper *Global Times*, which ran a commentary attacking the VOA interview.

In September, the *People's Daily*, the party mouth piece, ran a commentary criticizing the VOA for spreading the “American brand” of freedom and democracy. This attack is a clear indication that VOA threatens the Chinese government's tight control of press freedom.

### Tibet

In March, VOA's Tibetan Service hosted a debate among top candidates for the position of Tibet's political leader in exile (Sikyong, or prime minister). The exclusive prime-time event was broadcast on television, radio and the internet.

The debate was held in Dharamsala, India, where Tibet's Central Administration in exile is based. Lobsang Sangay, the incumbent Sikyong, and Penpa Tsering, Speaker of the exile Tibetan Parliament, participated.

In the fall of 2016, RFA's Tibetan service reported that Chinese officials confiscated passports of Tibetans authorized to travel abroad, while ordering other Tibetans to return home. Sources told RFA this action has been taken to reduce attendance at a ceremony to be conducted the next year in India by the Dalai Lama.



In March 2016, during the final round of elections for the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile of the Central Tibetan Administration, RFA covered incumbent Sikyong (political leader) Dr. Lobsang Sangay casting his vote in Dharamsala.

## SPOTLIGHT: SOUTH CHINA SEA PROJECT



At sunset on the shores of Masinloc in the province of Zambales, Philippines, town fishermen return from a day of fishing in the South China Sea, while others head out for overnight fishing. (S. Orendain/VOA)

In late 2016, Voice of America, in collaboration with Radio Free Asia, launched an ambitious interactive web project about the South China Sea. The project tells the story of how the area came to be dominated by China—in violation of international law—and explains clearly the complicated territorial disputes.

The package uses sophisticated graphics and web development to condense decades of moves and countermoves by each of the six nations claiming ownership.

The project also contains profiles of each claimant nation, including their assertions and economic interests, as well as their infrastructure and assets in the region. The slow accretion of territorial claims is revealed through interactive timelines, layered maps, and traditional reporting from VOA and RFA, providing one of the clearest explanations of one of the murkiest geopolitical disputes in modern times.

The project is available in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Indonesian, Khmer, Vietnamese and Lao.

### Uyghur

Throughout the year, RFA reported on the systemic persecution of ethnic minority Uyghurs by Chinese authorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. These include forced relocations, restrictions during the holy month of Ramadan and the destruction of thousands of mosques.

RFA's Uyghur and Mandarin Services reported on a number of directives ordered by Chinese authorities in Xinjiang, meant to "boost loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party." Under

these new rules, residents, mostly ethnic minority Uyghurs, are required to attend a weekly patriotic flag-raising ceremony and sing the national anthem. A strict dress code, including no veils, is enforced during the ceremonies. A second notice, issued at the same time, ordered local residents to notify the authorities of all planned naming ceremonies, marriages, deaths, and circumcisions of male children in advance. The government also issued a regional law making religious activities illegal for children, the parents of whom will be punished.

"I am a longtime listener of VOA. In the 1970s, I listened to VOA secretly as it was labeled 'the enemy station'. In the 1980s I was able to record VOA radio programs on cassette tapes. Today, I download your video programs." — VOA FAN IN CHINA



# Supporting Human Rights in Cuba

From the first U.S. Presidential visit in more than 88 years to the death of Fidel Castro, 2016 was a historic year for Cuba. And yet, the media environment remained tightly controlled and human rights violations continued. The multiplatform Office of Cuba Broadcasting provided remarkable coverage of these and all other news that were relevant to Cuban audiences.



## President Obama's Visit to Cuba

Radio and TV Martí broke regular programming for the longest extended period in OCB history to provide comprehensive coverage of the historic visit to Cuba, which took place from March 20 to March 22, 2016. TV Martí alone aired 22½ hours of live transmission to Cuba including—for the first time ever—live reports from Havana.

Hours of exclusive video were received from Martí's independent journalists on island and from the OCB and VOA teams on location, all used throughout all of the platforms and picked up by the general market media.

The Martí also provided expert analysis with in-studio and on-island guests from all sides of the political spectrum, ranging from current and former U.S. diplomats to Cuban dissidents, religious leaders and citizens from all walks of life. Alan Gross, the American aid worker released in 2014 after being imprisoned in Cuba for five years, was a guest and provided analysis and commentary on President Obama's speech to the Cuban people at El Gran Teatro de La Habana.

## Cuban Migrant Crisis

In 2016, hundreds of Cubans trying to reach U.S. soil by crossing various Latin American countries were left stranded in Colombia and Ecuador in terrible conditions. The Martí sent a crew to Turbo, Colombia, and to Quito, Ecuador, to report on the crisis of the Cuban migrants. National and International media outlets picked up the Martí's stories that showed families being separated in the journey, Cubans dying in the jungles and migrants living in deplorable conditions.

## Human Rights Violations

Every Sunday in 2016, the "Ladies in White" movement marched peacefully through the streets of Havana honoring family members that are political prisoners. The Martí closely followed the continuous detentions of the "Ladies in White" and their leader, Berta Soler. Government security forces beat, arrested and harassed marchers on many occasions in front of our cameras.

The Martí also covered the case of political dissident Guillermo Fariñas, recipient of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought by the European Parliament in 2010. Fariñas has

Left: *Damas de Blanco* (The Ladies in White) protest in Havana, Cuba, ahead of U.S. President Barack Obama's historic visit to the communist island. March 20, 2016 (V. Macchi/VOA)

Right: Alan Gross, the American aid worker previously imprisoned in Cuba and released in 2014, appeared as an analyst on TV Martí during coverage of President Obama's address to the Cuban people.





conducted more than 20 hunger strikes to protest the Cuban government's human rights violations. In April, during a long 53-day hunger strike, Fariñas collapsed and was sent to the hospital in critical condition.

Both Soler and Fariñas visited the Martí in Miami towards the end of the year and personally thanked the staff members for “giving them a voice” and for spreading their story around the world resulting in international support from the significant number of media pickups.

### Hurricane Matthew

In October, as category four Hurricane Matthew battered Baracoa, Radio Martí offered 25 hours of continuous special programming and took live calls from the affected areas. Coverage included reports from the National Hurricane Center about the impact of Hurricane Matthew in Cuba and phone calls with citizens and journalists on the island on the preparedness plans and the effect of the system in the area. Many reports from Cuba came via Facebook, Twitter and e-mail.

### U.N. Vote on U.S. Embargo of Cuba

The Martí also provided extensive coverage of the historic vote in the United Nations General Assembly on October 26 in which, for the first time in 25 years, the United States abstained instead of voting against a measure that was introduced by Cuba condemning the U.S. embargo. The Martí also broadcast the speech of the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Samantha Power, who explained the U.S. vote and why it chose to abstain rather than vote against the Cuban measure. The Martí also spoke with Cubans on the island and broadcast their reactions to the vote.

### Death of Fidel Castro

The end of 2016 was marked by the death of Communist leader Fidel Castro. The Martí network of independent journalists on island immediately filed reports that provided Cuban audiences with information not covered by the state government media. Special coverage was provided throughout the weekend including the arrests of dissidents openly commenting on the passing of Castro.

VOA filed multiple stories for its affiliates throughout Latin America on the U.S. perspective about Cuba after Castro.



A boy and a woman walk next to the remains of houses destroyed by Hurricane Matthew in Baracoa, Cuba. (October 5, 2016. Ramon Espinosa/AP)



## SPOTLIGHT: CUBA INTERNET FREEDOM CONFERENCE



Top: The Cuba Internet Freedom conference closed with a ground-breaking Q&A session when all the panelists from Cuba took the stage to share personal insights and respond to questions from the audience. The session was streamed live on Facebook.

Bottom: Juan Juan Almeida García, a journalist for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting's Radio Martí, interviews an internet freedom advocate at the Cuban Internet Freedom conference in Miami, on how to improve access to the internet on the island.

In September, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting hosted the first-ever Cuba Internet Freedom Conference (CIF), an event that brought together digital innovators and independent journalists from Cuba with other individuals focused on improving digital rights and fostering uncensored access for the island.

At the two-day event in Miami, developers, policy makers, nonprofit professionals, entrepreneurs, concerned citizens, and others gathered with Cuban internet innovators to exchange ideas on how to improve access to the internet on the island, as well as how to educate people about the actual situation of the internet in Cuba.

Through a series of yearlong special projects, OCB continued to provide Cuban audiences with innovative ways to access the internet. These projects include an internet freedom awareness campaign, advice on access and alternate routes and the improvement of anti-censorship tools and mechanisms.

“Keep informing the Cuban people as you have done all these years. Thanks to all, from a Cuban eager to know the truth.”

— A MARTÍ FACEBOOK FOLLOWER, HAVANA

# Responding to Unique News Needs in Africa





BBG operations in Africa are designed to be nimble and capable of rapidly responding to often-changing news and information needs. Voice of America broadcasts in more than two dozen languages throughout the region, providing what is often the only source of unbiased news and information.



Top: *Gabina* VOA, an Amharic-language radio show, gives young people in Ethiopia and Eritrea a platform to address their concerns and discuss topics that impact their lives. From left to right: hosts Henok Fente, Surafel Shiferaw and Mestawet Aragaw.

Left: Migrants from various African countries in an overcrowded dinghy are followed by members of the German NGO Jugend Rettet as the migrants approach the *Luventa* vessel during a rescue operation off the Libyan coast in the Mediterranean Sea. September 21, 2016. (Zohra Bensemra/Reuters)

### Overcoming jamming in Ethiopia

In August, when protests broke out across Ethiopia, the government began jamming VOA broadcasts via shortwave in Amharic (Ethiopia's national official language), as well as in Afaan Oromoo (spoken by the largest ethnic group) and Tigrigna (used in the north and in neighboring Eritrea).

VOA responded by boosting its broadcasts, adding an extra 30-minute daily program in Amharic and using two additional shortwave frequencies.

Engagement on the VOA Afaan Oromoo Facebook page increased more than 200 percent since the unrest began.

### Invisible Diaspora

While much of the international news media focused on the reports of migrants fleeing turmoil in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, the more than 150,000 people who fled violence and hardship in Africa largely have gone unnoticed. VOA's French-to-Africa and Somali Services documented the plight of African migrants who made their way from East and West Africa across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Photos of what they saw and the harrowing stories they heard became part of a special multimedia series, "Adrift: The Invisible African Diaspora."

### Panama Papers

VOA's Zimbabwe Service was a reporting partner with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists on the so-called Panama Papers detailing global financial misconduct. VOA uncovered documents linking mining executives to an offshore shell company that allegedly paid salaries skirting Zimbabwean tax laws, leading the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to open its own inquiry.

### Exposing Injustice in Nigeria

VOA's Hausa Service, with a measured audience of more than half of all Hausa-speakers in Nigeria, reported that although 22-year-old polio survivor Umar Yusuf won Nigeria's National Quranic Competition, contest officials sent the second-place finisher to the finals in Saudi Arabia instead. VOA Hausa exposed the injustice, galvanizing lawmakers and religious leaders, who ordered the immediate return of the replacement contestant and compensation for Yusuf, who thanked VOA "for standing firm and seeing to it that my right was restored."

"In Tripoli, every day people would come with guns to take our money, or they would ask us to come with them for a small job but, in fact, they would rob us. "

— SAMA TOUNKARA, REFUGEE FLEEING VIOLENCE IN MALI  
FROM "ADRIFT: THE INVISIBLE AFRICAN DIASPORA"





The host of *The Correspondents* VOA, Gaby Dorcil, reports from the roof of VOA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

### Uganda Election

Shaka Ssali, host and managing editor of Voice of America's TV and radio program *Straight Talk Africa*, was selected to serve as one of three moderators for the Uganda presidential debate in Kampala, Uganda on February 13, 2016. This was the first debate incumbent President Yoweri Museveni had ever agreed to. Ugandans went to the polls on February 18 to elect a new president from among eight candidates, including Museveni. Ssali was joined by retired journalist Joel Kibazo and Makerere University professor Suzie Muwanga to moderate the debate, which was viewed by millions in Uganda.

### New Programs

VOA's French-to-Africa Service launched a weekly television insert *Correspondents VOA*, placing on-camera VOA talent inside the nightly news programs of more than 20 affiliates with produced packages, commentary and analysis from Washington, from the

political conventions in Cleveland and Philadelphia, and from Election Night in New York.

VOA Kirundi launched the daily half-hour radio show *Iwanyu mu Ntara*, or *From the Provinces*, focusing on under-reported stories from outside Burundi's capital Bujumbura and from refugee camps in Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The program reunited a family separated for more than 20 years, joining on-air a woman facing financial hardship in rural Burundi with her brother who grew up in a refugee camp in Malawi and is now a small businessman who can help her.

The VOA60 Afurika program in Kinyarwanda became available to mobile subscribers in 2016. The 60-second daily news roundup, produced by VOA's Central Africa Service, will be available to smart and feature phone users. Subscribers will receive an SMS alert when new content is added, and when breaking news occurs. Subscribers also will have access to archived content and can engage with the service by leaving comments on the programs they hear.

VOA's Swahili Service launched a daily half-hour show *Kwa Undani* or *In Depth*, exploring the issues driving the day's news headlines. On Facebook Live, on shortwave, and on FM streams in Congo and Kenya, *Kwa Undani* takes VOA audiences beyond the soundbites to discuss what is behind stories from political deal-making to corruption and opposition to the International Criminal Court.

“Wow, the program opened my eyes and ears about the girls’ rights to make choices when they grow and venture into this huge world which is full of challenges.”

— VOA SWAHILI LISTENER

## SPOTLIGHT: SOMALI TOWN HALL



Residents in St. Paul, Minnesota, home to the largest Somali community in the U.S., conversed with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in a town hall hosted by VOA's Somali Service.

In September, VOA held a first-of-its-kind televised town hall linking young Somalis in Mogadishu with young Somali-Americans in Minneapolis. The event provided the Somali diaspora in Minnesota with a rare opportunity to speak directly with the Somali President, and they asked him questions on extremism, unemployment and education. Audiences in Minnesota gathered at Twin Cities Public Television station KTCA-TV, while audiences in Somalia met at the Presidential Palace in Mogadishu.

“Instead of local people looking at the diaspora as a strange or alien people, and the diaspora when they come and see the destruction and see that this is a different world—the engagement now, exposing what is inside Somalia and what is outside Somalia and having a common understanding, this is a good opportunity, and I am very much grateful for the VOA to provide this opportunity for the Somali youth,” Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud told VOA at the conclusion of the event.

The VOA program aired live on Somali National Television, on the VOA Somali website, and on the VOA Somali Facebook page, where videos of the event have received more than half a million views.

### Young African Leaders Initiative

Since the inception of the Young African Leaders Initiative in 2010, VOA has closely covered the program that brings African civic, business and community leaders aged 25–35 for six weeks of academic coursework, leadership training and networking at U.S. universities. In 2016, VOA interviewed more than 130 YALI fellows at their Washington summit and during their U.S. university studies.

U.S. Embassy Mali YALI coordinator Adama Kouyate said, “We have always had the impression that we increased our influence among our target groups after each broadcast or interview with VOA about our programs. These broadcasts have also enabled us to increase the number of people who follow us on Facebook and therefore increase the number of young people with whom we interact on issues related to good governance.”



Clockwise, from upper left, Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) fellows Glad Mabele of South Africa, Raabia Hawa of Kenya, Rui Figueiredo Soares of Cape Verde, Adele Boadzo of South Africa, and Balarabe Ismail of Nigeria were interviewed by VOA.

# Broadcasting Board of Governors



“Our mission is neither Democratic nor Republican, it’s American.”

— BBG CHAIRMAN JEFF SHELL

The Broadcasting Board of Governors met with Secretary Kerry on April 19, 2016. Front Row (L-R) BBG Governors Matthew Armstrong, Karen Kornbluh, Michael Kempner. Back Row (L-R) BBG CEO John Lansing, BBG Chairman Jeff Shell, Secretary Kerry, Under Secretary of State Richard Stengel, BBG Governor Kenneth Weinstein.



The Broadcasting Board of Governors is the name of the board that governs the agency of the same name. The board provided oversight of the agency's strategy and operations, including creation of the Office of Internet Freedom and the reorganization of IBB resources. Board meetings and related documents are available for viewing online, [bbg.gov/boardmeetings](http://bbg.gov/boardmeetings).

#### GOVERNORS SERVING IN 2016



##### **Jeff Shell, Chairman**

Jeff Shell is chairman of Universal Filmed Entertainment.

He previously served as chairman of NBC Universal International from 2011 to 2013 and as president of Comcast Programming Group from 2005 to 2011. Prior to joining Comcast, Shell held a number of positions, including CEO of Gemstar TV Guide International and President of the FOX Cable Networks Group. As president of the FOX Cable Networks, he oversaw the operations of FOX's entertainment and sports cable programming businesses. He currently serves on the board of the National Constitution Center. Shell earned a B.S. in Economics and Applied Mathematics from the University of California, Berkeley, and an M.B.A. from Harvard University.

He has served on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since August 2013.



##### **Matthew Armstrong**

Matt Armstrong is an author, lecturer and strategist on public diplomacy and international media. He has worked on traditional and emerging security issues with both civilian and military government agencies, news organizations, think tanks, and academia across several continents.

Armstrong serves on several organizational boards including the Public Diplomacy Council. He is also on the board for the Lodestone Trust, a land conservation trust providing an enduring venue for the research and development of programs in outdoor group therapy for military service-related post-traumatic stress disorder patients under professional supervision.

Armstrong earned a B.A. in International Relations and a Master of Public Diplomacy from the University of Southern California. He also studied European security and the Middle East at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

He has served on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since August 2013.



##### **Dr. Leon Aron**

Dr. Leon Aron is Resident Scholar and Director of Russian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, a position he has held since 1993. He was a weekly Contributor at the Voice of America's Russian language radio and television show *Gliadya iz Ameriki* (*Looking from America*) from 1990 to 2004.

Dr. Aron was previously an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University from 1994 to 1996 and a Senior Policy Analyst at the Heritage Foundation from 1987 to 1992. He was awarded the Peace Fellowship from the U.S. Institute of Peace from 1992 to 1993. Dr. Aron received a B.A. from Moscow State Pedagogical Institute and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Columbia University.

He has served on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since December 2014.



### Ambassador Ryan Crocker

Ambassador Crocker is dean of the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University—a position from which he took a leave of absence to serve as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan from 2011 to 2012.

He is also the James Schlesinger Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Virginia and was a Kissinger Senior Fellow at Yale University. His 37-year career in the Foreign Service included service as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Kuwait, and Lebanon. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Board of Trustees of Whitman College. Amb. Crocker is a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award, and the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Civilian Service. He earned a B.A. from Whitman College.

He has served on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since August 2013.



### Michael W. Kempner

Michael W. Kempner is the Founder, President, and CEO of MWW, a public relations firm he founded in 1986.

Kempner is a board member of Goodwill Industries International and a Founding Board Member of ConnectOne Bancorp. He served on the White House Council for Community Solutions from 2010 to 2012. In 2013, he was named Agency Leader of the Year by PR News, Executive of the Year by American Business Awards, and Agency Professional of the Year and Communications Professional of the Year by Bulldog Stars of PR. Kempner earned a B.S. from American University.

He has served on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since December 2014.



### Ambassador Karen Kornbluh

Ambassador Karen Kornbluh is the Executive Vice President of External Affairs for Nielsen, responsible for global public policy, privacy strategy, and corporate social responsibility.

Prior to joining Nielsen, Amb. Kornbluh was the U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) from 2009 to 2012. Previously, she was Policy Director for then-Senator Barack Obama. She has served as Deputy Chief of Staff at the US Treasury Department and Director of the Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Federal Communications Commission. Additionally, she founded the New America Foundation's Work and Family Program and is a senior fellow for Digital Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. She has an A.B. in economics from Bryn Mawr College and a Master's of Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

She has served on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since December 2014.



### Kenneth Weinstein

Kenneth Weinstein has been President and CEO of Hudson Institute since 2011. Since joining Hudson Institute in 1999, he has held several other positions, including Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Senior Fellow, and Director of the Washington Office. From 1996 to 1998, he was the Director of the Government Reform Project at the Heritage Foundation, and from 1994 to 1996, he was Director of Research at the New Citizenship Project. He served on the National Council of the Humanities from 2006 to 2012 and was appointed to the D.C. Advisory Board to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 2010. Weinstein received a B.A. from the University of Chicago, an M.Phil. from the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, and a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

He has served on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since September 2013.



### John Kerry

John Forbes Kerry was named the 68th Secretary of State of the United States on February 1, 2013.

Previously, Kerry served 28 years in the United States Senate, with the last four as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

As a senator, Kerry was a leader on key foreign policy and national security issues, including nuclear nonproliferation and global climate change. Prior to chairing the committee, Kerry chaired the Asia and Middle East subcommittees where he authored and passed major legislation on international drug trafficking, international money laundering, humanitarian aid, and climate change, and he helped negotiate the agreement establishing the United Nations tribunal to prosecute war crimes in Cambodia.

Kerry was represented on the Board by Richard Stengel, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. On December 8, Ambassador Bruce Wharton was designated as acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

*Today's Broadcasting Board of Governors is not the BBG of a few years ago. Much-needed change has come to one of the U.S. government's most critical agencies, and it couldn't have come at a more important time.*

*With the decrease in press freedoms around the world and the increase in extremist propaganda and disinformation, access to the truth is more important than ever. I applaud the reforms that BBG's new leadership has already taken, and I congratulate CEO John Lansing for the energy and enthusiasm he has brought to the organization.*

—JOHN KERRY, APRIL 19, 2016



# 2016 Awards

BBG journalists, producers and other staff were honored with numerous professional awards from around the world. More information is available at [bbg.gov/2016awards](http://bbg.gov/2016awards).



From left to right: Maria González, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Tomas Cardoso, host of Radio Martí's *Cuba al Día*, and BBG CEO John F. Lansing at the 2016 Burke Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

## BBG

### 2016 David R. Burke Awards

Every year the BBG presents the David Burke Distinguished Journalism Awards to recognize courage, integrity and professionalism of journalists working for U.S. international media.

VOA .....Ayesha Tanzeem,  
Islamabad Bureau Chief

RFE/RL.....The staff of Crimea Realities,  
Ukrainian Service

OCB .....Tomas Cardoso, host,  
Radio Martí

RFA .....Vuthy Khim Huot,  
Khmer Service

MBN .....Correspondents in Yemen:  
Arafat Mudabesh,  
Abdul Kareem Shaibany, and  
Mokhtar El-Sharafi

## Internet

### Webby Awards

#### People's Voice Award

RFE/RL — *Watch This Disabled*  
*Boy's World Change in Two Minutes*

### Kyrgyz Association of Young Businessmen

#### Best Anti-Corruption Online Publication

RFE/RL — *Kyrgyzstan In The Eurasian*  
*Economic Union: Fuel Smuggling Increases*

### The Lovie Awards

#### Website/News (Bronze)

RFE/RL  
*RFE/RL's responsive website*

### African Digital Media Awards

#### Best Data Visualization Project (Second place)

VOA Africa Division  
*How Long Have Africa's Presidents Held Office?*

### Award.kz

#### Best Bilingual Website (Second place)

RFE/RL Kazakh Service

## Radio

### Office of the Afghan Presidency

#### Sayed Jamalludin Medal

RFE/RL  
*Faizullah Qardash and Oman Niazi,*  
*Radio Azadi, Afghan service*

### Afghan Journalist Federation

#### Freedom of Speech Award

RFE/RL  
*Radio Azadi, Afghan Service*

### Association for International Broadcasting

#### Best Radio Journalism (Shortlist)

MBN Radio Sawa

### New York Festivals International Radio Programs Awards

#### Current Affairs Program (Finalist)

MBN Radio Sawa  
*Free Zone: Arab Refugee Crisis*

#### Best Coverage of an Ongoing News Story (Finalist)

MBN Radio Sawa  
*Muslim-Americans and the Fight Against ISIS*

#### Online News (Finalist)

RFA  
*Breaking Free: Stories of Escape*  
*from Traffickers*

## Television

### New York Festivals International TV and Film Awards

#### Promotional Program (Bronze)

MBN Alhurra TV  
*Delusional Paradise*

#### Magazine Format/Information Program (Silver)

RFE/RL  
*Desperate Honeymoon*

#### Current Affairs Category (Bronze)

RFE/RL  
*Desperate Honeymoon*

#### Documentary/Information Program TV (Silver)

VOA Mandarin Service  
*Journey 1945: China's Path to Victory*

#### Biography/Profiles (Finalist)

VOA  
*A Single Step*

#### Special Report (Finalist)

VOA  
*U.S. Voting Rights Act Anniversary series*

#### Education/Instructional (Finalist)

VOA  
*The Making of the Constitution*

**News: Reports and Features (Finalist)**

MBN Alhurra TV  
*Al Youm: Yazidi Girl Survival*

**News: Reports and Features (Finalist)**

MBN Alhurra TV  
*Al Youm: Man Tries to Sell His Daughter*

**Documentary/Information Program (Finalist)**

MBN Alhurra TV  
*Almajalla: Art and the Syrian Revolution*

**Online News (Finalist)**

RFA  
*Breaking Free: Stories of Escape from Traffickers*

**Cannes Corporate Media & TV Awards****Current Affairs, Human Concerns & Social Issues (Silver)**

MBN Alhurra TV  
*Delusional Paradise*

**UNICEF Annual Regional Media Award**

RFE/RL  
*Each Morning, New Fear*

**Adami Media Prize****Young ADAMI Media Prize**

RFE/RL  
*Generation Emigration*

**Triumph Awards****Best Reporter**

RFE/RL  
*Mykhailo Tkach, Ukrainian Service*

**National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences—Suncoast Chapter Emmy Awards****Interactive Storytelling (Nominated)**

OCB  
*Pablito, el Fan #1 de La Pelota en Cuba*

**Promotion—News Promo—Image (Nominated)**

OCB  
*Obama en Cuba—Proof of Performance Promo*

**Continuing Coverage (Nominated)**

OCB  
*Obama en Cuba*

**Human Interest Program (Nominated)**

OCB  
*La Vida Por el Arte, en Libertad*

**Chesapeake Associated Press Broadcasters Association****Best Video Journalist/One Man Band Reporter**

VOA  
*Kane Farabaugh*

**Special Note****National Order for Faithful Service (Romania)****Rank of Commander**

RFE/RL  
*Vasile Botnaru, Moldovan Service*

**National Union of Journalists of Ukraine****Igor Lyubchenko Press Freedom Award**

RFE/RL  
*Mykola Semena, Crimea.Realities, Ukrainian Service*

**Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum****Pavel Sheremet Journalism Award**

RFE/RL  
*Mykola Semena, Crimea.Realities, Ukrainian Service*

**Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko Presidential Decree****Jubilee Anniversary Medal**

RFE/RL  
*Mykola Semena, Crimea.Realities, Ukrainian Service*

**Georgian Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection's Writer's House of Georgia****Best Novel/Collection of Stories**

RFE/RL  
*Jimsher Rekhviashvili, Georgian Service*

**Royal Family of Thailand****Prachabdi Award**

VOA  
*Aye Aye Mar, Burmese Service*

**The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars****Outstanding Internship Site Supervisor**

VOA  
*Kathleen Struck  
 From Government of Poland*

**Bene Merito Medal**

RFE/RL  
*Valery Kalinovski, Belarus Service*

**Belarusian Association of Democratic NGOs****Journalist of the Year**

RFE/RL  
*Halina Abakunchyk, Belarus Service*

**Kyrgyz Committee for Protection of Press Freedom****Best Investigative Reporter**

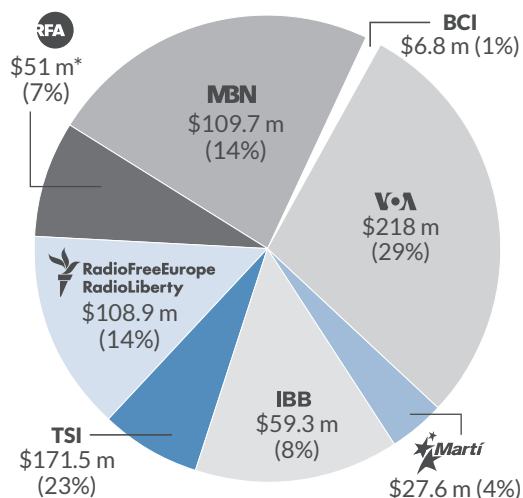
RFE/RL  
*Kubanychbek Joldoshev, Kyrgyz Service*

**2016 Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism**

VOA  
*Eloge Willy Kaneza, Kirundi Service*

# Financial Highlights

## Allocation of BBG FY16 Budget



The independent accounting firm, Kearney & Company, conducted our FY2015 financial statement audit and issued an unmodified opinion on our Principal Financial Statements.

Preparing these statements allows the BBG to improve financial management and provide accurate and reliable information to Congress, the President and the taxpayer. BBG management is responsible for the integrity and objectivity of the financial information presented in the statements.

The financial statements and financial data presented in this report have been prepared from the accounting records of the BBG in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles and incorporate the application of the standards as prescribed by the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board.

(IN THOUSANDS)	2016	2015
<b>AT END OF THE YEAR</b>		
Condensed Balance Sheet Data		
Fund Balance with Treasury	\$ 208,276	\$ 204,609
Accounts Receivable	605	1,656
Advances to Surrogate Broadcasters	54,000	44,800
Property, Plant and Equipment	105,627	111,176
Other	1,799	962
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 370,307</b>	<b>\$ 363,203</b>
Accounts Payable and Other	33,350	34,789
Payroll and Retirement Benefits	43,412	44,666
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 76,762</b>	<b>\$ 79,455</b>
Unexpended Appropriations	203,567	194,975
Cumulative Results of Operations	89,978	88,773
<b>TOTAL NET POSITION</b>	<b>\$ 293,545</b>	<b>\$ 283,748</b>
Total Liabilities and Net Position	<b>\$ 370,307</b>	<b>\$ 363,203</b>

(IN THOUSANDS)	2016	2015
<b>FOR THE YEAR</b>		
Condensed Statement of Net Cost Data		
<b>Total Cost</b>	\$ 754,084	\$ 756,070
<b>Total Earned Revenue</b>	(4,009)	(5,878)
<b>Total Net Cost of Operations</b>	<b>\$ 750,075</b>	<b>\$ 750,192</b>

\* RFA budget includes funds for the Open Technology Fund.



# BBG at a Glance



## VOICE OF AMERICA

Budget: \$218 million in FY 2016  
Employees: 1,078  
Languages: 47  
Mobile Apps: available in 43 versions  
Apple iOS and Android  
Online: voanews.com; @VOAnews



## RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY

Budget: \$108.9 million in FY 2016  
Employees: 623  
Languages: 26  
Mobile Apps: available in 30 versions Apple iOS and Android; Samsung SmartTV app for content in 16 languages  
Online: rferl.org; @rferl



## OFFICE OF CUBA BROADCASTING

Budget: \$27.6 million in FY 2016  
Employees: 117  
Languages: One, Spanish  
Mobile Apps: available in Spanish Apple iOS and Android  
Online: martinoticias.com; @martinoticias



## RADIO FREE ASIA

Budget: \$51 million in FY 2016\*  
Employees: 253  
Languages: 9  
Mobile Apps: available in 12 versions on Apple iOS and Android  
Online: rfa.org; @RadioFreeAsia



## MIDDLE EAST BROADCASTING NETWORKS

Budget: \$109.7 million in FY 2016  
Employees: 869  
Language: One, Arabic  
Mobile Apps: available in Arabic on Apple iOS and Android  
Online: alhurra.com; radiosawa.com  
@alhuranews; @radiosawa

## INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING BUREAU (IBB)

IBB Budget: \$59.3 million in FY 2016  
IBB Employees: 203

## OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES & INNOVATION (TSI)

TSI Budget: \$171.5 million in FY 2016  
TSI Employees: 390

## 61 Languages Worldwide

### GLOBAL

English  
(including Learning English)

### AFRICA

Afaan Oromoo  
Amharic  
Bambara  
French  
Hausa  
Kinyarwanda  
Kirundi  
Ndebele  
Portuguese  
Sango  
Shona  
Somali  
Songhai  
Swahili  
Tigrigna

### CENTRAL ASIA

Kazakh  
Kyrgyz  
Tajik  
Turkmen  
Uzbek

### EAST ASIA

Burmese  
Cantonese  
Indonesian  
Khmer  
Korean  
Lao  
Mandarin  
Thai  
Tibetan  
Uyghur  
Vietnamese

### EASTERN/CENTRAL EUROPE

Albanian  
Bosnian  
Croatian  
Macedonian  
Montenegrin  
Romanian-to-Moldova  
Serbian  
Ukrainian

### EURASIA

Armenian  
Avar  
Azerbaijani  
Bashkir  
Belarusian  
Chechen  
Circassian  
Crimean Tatar  
Georgian  
Russian  
Tatar

### LATIN AMERICA

Creole  
Spanish

### NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA

Arabic  
Kurdish  
Turkish

### SOUTH ASIA

Bangla  
Dari  
Pashto  
Persian  
Urdu

## DIVERSE CONTENT DELIVERY

Platform	FM	AM	SW	Satellite	Terrestrial TV	Live Streaming	On-Demand	Web	Mobile	Social Media	Email	SMS	DVD/Flash Drives
Audio	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■			■
Video				■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■
Text				■				■	■	■	■	■	■



Broadcasting  
Board of  
Governors



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BBG informs, engages, and connects people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

